Issue 63 – Thursday 3 February 2005

route ONE

Direct to the heart of the coach and bus industry

Prepare to enter the...

route ONE Excellence Awards 2005

Rewarding the operator

Together at last

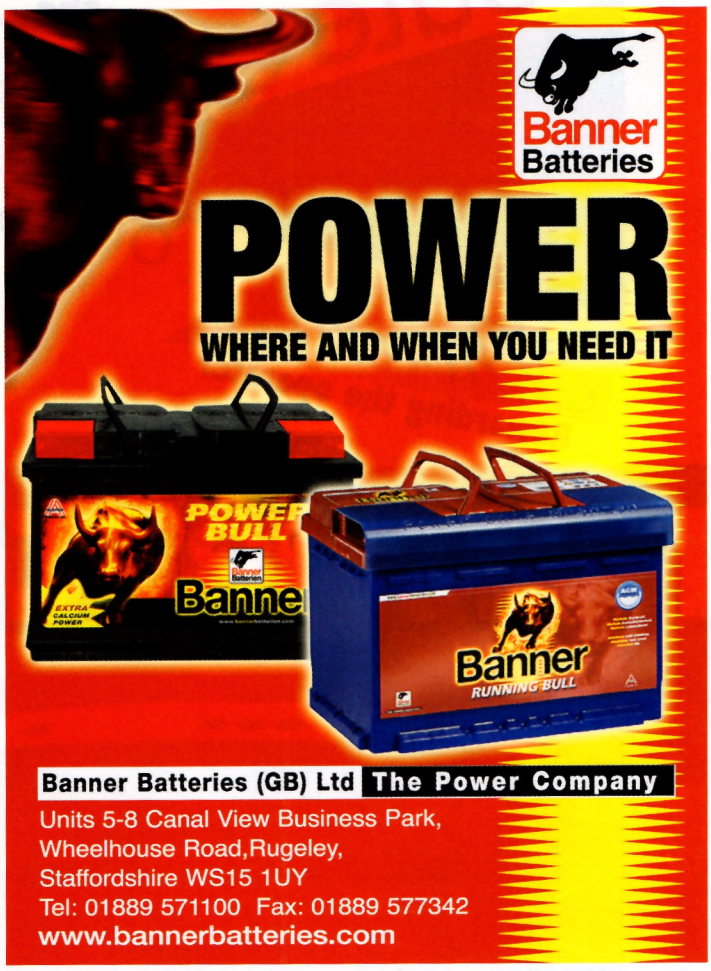
WA and Shearings deal is agreed

"We're not for turning"
Darling's clear dereg' statement

Black Prince bows out
Brian Crowther sells routes to First

Westminster success
Coach pick-up rules relaxed

Marchant's race ahead
Cheltenham operator buys B12Bs



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AIR CONDITIONED

2002 MERCEDES SPRINTER 413 OPTARE SOROCCO, 16 recliners, large boot, power door, **air conditioning**.....*RING TO VIEW*.....**£42,000**

2001 SCANIA L94 IRIZAR CENTURY, 53 recliners, **air-conditioning**.....CHOICE OF SEVERAL.....**£95,000**

2001 DENNIS R SERIES PLAXTON PANTHER, 49 recliners, crew seat, centre sunken toilet, continental door fridge, boiler, double glazed, **air conditioned**.....**£93,000**

2001 VOLVO B10M CAETANO ENIGMA, 49 recliners, rear saloon toilet, auto gearbox, **air conditioned**.....**£95,000**

2000 VOLVO B10MT VAN HOOL ALIZEE SH, 49/53 recliners, centre demountable toilet, continental door, **air conditioning**, retarder, double glazing, reversing camera.....**£110,000**

2000 (W) MAN 18.350 NEOPLAN TRANSLINER, 53 recliners, fridge, video/monitor, **air conditioning**, alloys.....**£95,000**

1999 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON EXCALIBUR, 49/53 recliners, crew seat, centre sunken demountable toilet, continental door, **air conditioning**, double glazing, auto gearbox.....**£85,000**

1999 BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49 recliners, crew seat, **air conditioning,** centre sunken toilet, continental door, Telma.....*RING TO VIEW*.....**£95,000**

1998 VOLVO B10M BERKHOF AXIAL, 40/49 recliners, crew seat, **air conditioned**, double glazing, centre sunken toilet, hot water boiler, double fridge at rear, microwave, video & 2 monitors, continental door, driver's bunk, Webasto, Telma retarder, exterior finished in white unsignwritten **£76,500**

1998 VOLVO B10M BERKHOF AXIAL, 49 retrimmed recliners, centre toilet, cont. door, fridge, boiler, Webasto, Telma, **air conditioned** .....*RING TO VIEW*.....**£80,000**

1997 SETRA 250 SPECIAL, 49 recliners, rear saloon toilet, fridge in dashboard, 2 crew seats, double glazing, radio/PA/monitor/video.....**£75,000**

1997 VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE MISTRAL, 49/53 recliners, crew seat, **air conditioned**, demountable toilet & continental door.....**£79,500**

1996 MERCEDES 814 ROBIN HOOD, 16 seater, **air conditioned**, power door, to be sold with new MoT.....**£18,750**

1995 SETRA S210H, 24 Ambiente recliners, 6 tables, 2 crew seats, rear saloon toilet, rear servery, video + monitor, **air conditioned**.....*RING TO VIEW*.....**£60,000**

1994 SETRA 210H, 35 recliners, rear continental door + steps + floor panel, **air conditioning,** fridge by dashboard, curtains.....**£39,950**

1993 VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE, 48 recliners, crew seat, rear sunken toilet, continental door, **air conditioned**, rack locker doors, Telma.....**~~£45,000~~ reduced to £36,000**

VOLVOS

1998 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PREMIERE 350, 49/53 recliners, crew seat, double glazed, rear sunken toilet, continental door.....**~~£82,500~~ reduced to £79,600**

1997 VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE MISTRAL, 51 recliners, crew seat, rear saloon toilet, continental door, boiler by crew seat.....**£67,000**

1990 VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE, 53 recliners, crew seat, power door.....**£23,500**

1990 VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE DEAUVILLE 599, low driver, 51 Vogal recliners, crew seat, rear sunken toilet, continental door, boiler, double glazing.....**£24,000**

1990 VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3200, 57 seater.....**£24,950**

1989 VOLVO B10M DUPLE 340, 34 Vogel recliners, crew seat, centre wheelchair lift, rear sunken toilet, rear servery, 7 tables., power door.....**£12,500**

1989 VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE DEAUVILLE 599, low driver, 49 recliners, driver's cab door **£19,000**

1987 VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE P50, 53 recliners, Power door.....**£15,000**

1986 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 53 recliners, power door, radio/tape/PA, Telma, carpet.....**£10,250**

1986 VOLVO B10M CAETANO ALGARVE, 53 seats.....**£9,000**

OTHER COACHES & MIDIS - MINIS

2000 MAN 18.350 NEOPLAN TRANSLINER, 49 recliners, crew seat,centre sunken toilet, continental door, hot water boiler, fridge in dashboard, double glazing.....**£95,000**

1996 MERCEDES 814 AUTOBUS NOUVELLE 1, 33 coach seats, 3 point belts, bus doors, destination gear.....**£22,000**

1995 TOYOTA OPTIMO, 18 seats, large new boot, interior luggage pen.....**£10,250**

1995 MERCEDES 711D AUTOBUS, 24 seats, belts, p/door, rack, boot, radio.....**£17,000**

1995 MERCEDES 814 CRYSTALS, 33 coach seats, power door, rear boot, racks, forced air ventilation, reading lights.....**£19,500**

1995 DENNIS JAVELIN GX BERKHOF EXCELLENCE 1000LD, 51 recliners, crew seat, rear sunken toilet, continental door, double glazed, low driver.....**£38,000**

1995 MAN 18.370 BERKHOF EXCELLENCE 1000LD, 51 recliners, crew seat, centre sunken toilet, continental door, fridge, hot water boiler, double glazing.....**£39,500**

1994 TOYOTA OPTIMO, 18 seats, large rear boot, interior luggage pen.....**£7,750**

1994 MAN 11.190 BERKHOF EXCELLENCE 1000 MIDI, 22/30 recliners, rear saloon toilet, rear servery, 4 tables, continental door, retarder, radio/tape/PA/video/monitor.....**£42,500**

1993 DODGE PP160 WS VANGUARD II, 33 semi-coach seats, 3 point seat belts, luggage racks, rear boot, tinted windows, radio/PA, auto G/B.....**£12,000**

1992 BOVA FUTURA FHD, 55 newly retrimmed recliners, crew seat, double glazed, demounted centre toilet & continental door.....**£31,500**

1990 LEYLAND TIGER 290 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500 CUMMINS L10 ZFM, 49 retrimmed recliners, crew seat, rear continental door, sunken toilet, drinks machine, Telma, radio/tape/PA/monitor.....**£19,000**

1990 MERCEDES 0303 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 53 seat, power door.....**£27,000**

1990 MERCEDES 609 M2M, 23 seats.....**£3,750**

1989 DENNIS JAVELIN DUPLE 320, 57 seats.....**£4,250**

1988 SCANIA K112 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 49 retrimmed recliners, centre sunken toilet, crew seat, continental door.....**£14,000**

1983 LEYLAND TIGER PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 48 seats, crew seat, rear saloon toilet **£3,950**

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thisweek

routeONE issue 63 3 February 2005

Cover story

Together at last

WA and Shearings deal is agreed

IT'S been predicted for years, rumoured for months, and expected for weeks. Finally, the £216m deal to merge the industry's two coach holiday giants is all but complete. Mike Morgan reports.

Full story on pages 4&5.

Rewarding the operator

WE HAVE the venue, we have the date, we have the sponsors, we have the categories, we have the judges, we have the experience and the organisation... you have the routeONE Excellence Awards.

The first routeONE Excellence Awards is on Wednesday 5 October at a prestigious gala dinner held at the superb National Motorcycle Museum. This event is being organised by our experienced event management team, and it coincides with this year's two-day industry show at the nearby NEC, Birmingham.

However, now is the time to think about entries. If your aspiration is to be the best at what you do, then the routeONE Excellence Awards is for you.

Look out for the entry form in next week's issue of routeONE. This form gives you the opportunity to tell the expert judging panel what makes your business, and your managers, exceptional. It kicks-off the process, which leads to the presentation of trophies and certificates on 5 October.

Our motivation for organising this event is straight-forward. We believe that excellence among coach and bus operators deserves to be recognised. Identifying best practice is one way to raise standards across the whole industry.

The routeONE Excellence Awards puts you and your company in the running for the ultimate accolade of being voted the best in the business.

There are 11 categories covering the full spectrum of coach and bus operation.

The categories cover three sizes of coach operator, and three sizes of bus operator. There are also awards for the best accessible coach operator and the best accessible bus operator.

Also, we are inviting nominations from operators for the accolade of top coach manager and the top bus manager. Then there's a special award that will be reserved for that one person (or company) who stands out from the crowd.

The categories are:

- Coach Operator of the Year (31-plus vehicles)
- Coach Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles)
- Coach Operator of the Year (1-10 vehicles)
- Bus Operator of the Year (31-plus vehicles)
- Bus Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles)
- Bus Operator of the Year (1-10 vehicles)
- Accessible Coach Operator of the Year
- Accessible Bus Operator of the Year
- Coach Manager of the Year
- Bus Manager of the Year
- routeONE Special Award

Once the entries have rolled in the judging process will start in May.

At their first meeting the judges will assess the entry forms. Their aim will be to narrow down the entries to produce a short-list that will then go to an appointed independent business adviser who will be tasked with auditing all of the front-runners.

By June a picture will start to emerge. You will be told if you are shortlisted and the adviser will report back to the judging panel so that during the summer the final decision can be made.

Votes will have been cast to decide the winner, but the results will be a closely guarded secret until the winners are announced on the evening of 5 October.

I look forward to receiving your entries.

Mike Morgan
Editor

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To comply with the requirements of the *Audit Bureau of Circulations*, we must have individual signed requests to add names to the circulation list. ABC application approved – September 2003. Qualifying readers get their copy free every Thursday. To receive a copy call 0870 241 8745. All readers will be asked to fill in a form once every three years to ensure that routeONE is still giving the industry what it wants out of a weekly news-led magazine.

COVER DESIGN: Tony Henthorn

cpt COACH TOURISM COUNCIL

Wallace Arnold and together at last

It's been predicted for years, rumoured for months, and expected for weeks. Finally, the £216m deal to merge the industry's two coach holiday giants is all but complete. Mike Morgan reports

AS EXCLUSIVELY forecast by routeONE two weeks ago, Wallace Arnold and Shearings are to merge to create a coach holiday giant with combined sales of more than £216m.

The deal announced on Tuesday (1 February) is being structured as a Wallace Arnold (WA) take over of Shearings, although the most senior management position will be held by Shearings boss John Slatcher who becomes Chief Executive as WA Chief Executive Ken Meddes leaves. WA Chairman Bernard Norman keeps his role.

Although contracts have been exchanged, the deal is subject to, among other things, a review by the Office of Fair Trading within 30 days.

The new group is to trade as WA Shearings. It will be formed out of a merger of the Wallace Arnold parent, Coach Holiday Group (CHG) and Shearings. CHG is the parent company of Wallace Arnold, National Holidays, and Caledonian Travel.

CHG's existing majority shareholder since August 1997, venture capital company 3i, will hold 67.8% of the new group and management 32.2%, of which a proportion is intended for an employee share option scheme.

Prior to the merger an institutional syndicate led by Bridgepoint held a 61.5% majority stake in Shearings. Bridgepoint funded a £92m Shearings management buyout (MBO) in 1996 and has been looking for a clean exit, prompting two failed attempts at a flotation on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) – in the wake of 9/11 and last June (routeONE, News, 24 June).

A deal to bring WA and Shearings together has been on the cards on two previous occasions – in 2001 and 2003, while in 1997 Bridgepoint tried to buy WA, but was outbid by 3i. The merger is, therefore, no surprise, and was expected two weeks ago (routeONE, News, 20 January) when industry sources were indicating that it was almost complete.

Rumours of a merger between Shearings and Wallace Arnold first surfaced last November, and have been consistently denied by the two companies routeONE, News, 11 November 2004).

Leeds-based CHG comprises three businesses: Wallace Arnold marketing premium coach holidays to Europe and the UK through travel agents (including 20 own agencies); Caledonian Travel/National Holidays Limited, selling direct to the budget coach holiday market; and Wallace Arnold Hotels, eight hotels in UK holiday destinations.

Historically a coach-based company, Shearings has expanded to include hotel breaks, air, cruise and rail; carrying over 500,000 holidaymakers every year to destinations in the UK, Ireland, Europe, Canada, America, Australia and New Zealand. It employs over 2,400 employees at 50 locations, including its Wigan head office. Shearings Hotels Ltd owns and operates nearly 40 UK hotels.

John Slatcher heralded the merger as a "transforming step" for the two companies. He told routeONE: "We believe this merger presents an exciting opportunity for employees, customers, partners and shareholders. The combination of the two businesses, with their strong

Shearings in profile

Shearings was established in 1903 as a coach-based company. It expanded its product range to include hotel breaks, air, cruise and rail; carrying over 500,000 holiday makers every year to a variety of destinations in the UK, Ireland, Europe, Canada, America, Australia, and New Zealand. Shearings owns 36 hotels throughout the UK. A successful MBO backed by Bridgepoint was completed in December 1996. It has 226 coaches covered by a ground-breaking contract maintenance deal with Volvo. It employs 2,400 people.

Coach Holiday Group in profile

The buyout of Wallace Arnold (WA) was completed in 1997, and Coach Holiday Group (CHG) was formed in 2001 when WA acquired Caledonian Travel, and National Holidays. WA is the oldest company in the group and was established in 1912 and named after its originators. An innovator of its time, the company operated classic holiday tours up and down the UK to main holiday destinations and was considered to be one of the early holiday pioneers. CHG organises coach holidays throughout the UK and Europe for around 500,000 customers. WA owns nine hotels and operates some 20 travel shops. It has an all-Volvo coach fleet – 221 based in Leeds, Torquay or liveried for Caledonian and National Holidays. CHG has 1,000 employees.

d Shearings

brand awareness and discerning customer base, will significantly enhance our holiday offering, providing customers with greater choice and convenience."

Ken Beaty, 3i Director, says the merger is "a compelling strategic fit" that "will provide a strong platform for further growth."

There are inevitable synergies as a result of the two companies coming together. However, CHG Chairman Bernard Norman denies any large scale job loses, saying that "the vibrant and ambitious enlarged company will offer employees increased opportunities for further development."

A multi-branded approach is to be maintained with the new WA Shearings brand becoming prominent from Autumn 2005. WA's up-market Grand Tourer holiday programme is to continue, as are the 'value-for-money' Caledonian Travel and National Holidays products under the wing of Managing Director Graham Rogers.

Future profit growth would be driven by greater efficiencies created by the merger, rationalising the infrastructure and cost base, and identifying selective mergers. The increased scale of the business and combined customer database of 2.5 million are seen a platform for diversification of the product range, offering greater choice.

Further developing air-coach holidays to Europe and short-stay self-drive breaks in the UK could also form a key element of the growth strategy.

routeONE Comment

As you would expect, the parties to the merger are presenting the deal in an entirely positive light.

WA Shearings would have a 14% share of the UK coach holiday business and is deliberately targeting the over-55 segment as one of the fastest growing travel sectors with 24% having taken a UK coaching holiday. For the first time the number of people over 60 years of age outnumbered those over 16. The trend is set to continue.

According to the 2003 Greypower report, 71% of mature travellers take holidays in Continental Europe, 73% in the UK, with the remainder, 36%, choosing long haul trips.

If WA Shearings goes for growth there are no downsides, except perhaps a 1½% reduction in the work force as a common feeder network is introduced this season and as part of an inevitable rationalisation of management and back-office functions. WA Shearings will also be mindful that one-plus-one rarely equals two when it comes to mergers. In the short-term at least it will have to work hard just to stand still.

Meanwhile the rest of the industry has a vested interest in its success… or otherwise. The volume of new coach sales has long relied on orders from WA and Shearings with the second-hand market equally dependent on a steady supply of good quality late-model vehicles. The decision to cut-back on the combined fleet will be unwelcome.

Meanwhile there are over 600 UK coach operators who supply coach holidays in a highly fragmented market. They thrive by providing a local service to a local market and the emergence of a strong national competitor keen to grow the total market should be seen as an opportunity for small family-based companies to build on their USP.

top stories

Black Prince joins the exodus

YET ANOTHER family business has concluded there is little future in the bus and coach business and decided to sell.....PAGE 6

The Secretary of State says: "No"

IT IS THE most unequivocal statement yet as the Secretary of State for Transport Alistair Darling told the industry that there are no plans to re-regulate the bus services.....PAGE 7

Grantham deal imminent

THE UNCERTAINTY hovering over the Grantham bus network is expected to end as Leicester-based Centrebus completes the deal that will see it take over the local services relinquished by MASS Transit (routeONE, News, 27 January).....PAGE 8

Alexander Dennis offers low-floor school bus

ALEXANDER Dennis (ADL) is offering the first UK-built, fully DDA compliant, low-floor school bus.....PAGE 10

Westminster relaxes coach pick-up rule

IN A ground-breaking agreement Westminster City Council (WCC) and the London Tourist Coach Operators Association (LTCOA) with the support of Transport for London (TfL) and the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) have reached an agreement to allow coaches a 10-minute window for picking up and setting down outside tourist attractions, hotels and the like within the borough.....PAGE 12

New Geminis launch £1m fast TWM route

TRAVEL West Midlands launched its new £1m Walsall-Birmingham Premier 997 service on Sunday (30 January).....PAGE 14

Working Time Directive

The breaking news about the Wallace Arnold/Shearings merger has resulted in the Working Time Directive story being held over to next week.

New deal for Belfast drivers

TRANSLINK has signed a three-year agreement with drivers, said to be the most radical upheaval of pay and conditions for 30 years, enabling it to introduce Belfast's new simplified Metro bus network on 7 February.

The Metro system has 12 key arterial routes and an additional network of services within the greater Belfast area. A new vehicle livery and new bus stop signs is being used, alongside a new colour-coded timetable.

A comprehensive public advertising and communications campaign begins next week.

Czech drivers

FORTY experienced bus drivers recruited in the Czech Republic have joined First; 32 are going to Crewe and eight to Adderley Green. They follow First's recruitment last year of drivers from Poland for Glasgow, Bristol and Bath. Following a high-profile campaign, First in Bath now has a waiting list of people wanting to become drivers and it has stopped recruiting from overseas.

Appeal ended

COACH driver Jack Webb has withdrawn his appeal against a six-month driving ban and £250 fine, after being caught by police driving while using his mobile phone and allowing a 10-year-old girl to sit on the dashboard (routeONE, News, 2 December 2004).

Route upgrade

THE Rotherham-Worksop route has been upgraded in a £2 million quality bus project, including new Stagecoach buses, highway works and safety features. All 117 bus stops and shelters have been enhanced, including raised kerbs.

Rochester up

MEDWAY Council says that coach visits to Rochester – which was awarded CPT's Coach Friendly Town status in 2004 - were up 10% on those of 2003.

Black Prince joins the exodus

Stephen Morris

YET ANOTHER family business has concluded there is little future in the coach and bus business and decided to sell.

Proprietor Brian Crowther has agreed to sell his Black Prince of Morley and Leeds Suburban Buses operations to First. Black Prince runs 36, mainly Scania, buses (the maximum allowed on its O-licence) on local services around Morley and Leeds. Leeds Suburban Buses has an O-Licence for 12 vehicles.

Brian Crowther, who started the coach business in 1969 and went on to run buses from deregulation in 1986, said his decision to get out, though provoked by a minor heart attack in October, from which he has made a full recovery, was down to "the way the industry's going."

"We're told people want low-floor buses, but the customers aren't interested in them. We have to get drivers screened for this, that and the other, Metro (West Yorkshire PTE) wants real time information - it's all costs and we're just not making enough. It's time to get out", he told routeONE. "Insurance costs are another thing," he said. "Insurance is costing us £35,000 a month."

The business was advertised to 40 potential buyers, but only two, First and Dunn Line, responded. Brian's son David is also in the business and is Leeds Suburban Buses' Transport Manager "but he's working seven days a week. I asked him if he wanted to take over, and he said 'no, I don't'". David has been offered a position at First, as have all drivers. Brian is to take retirement. Only the routes are included in the deal; there are eight fully-commercial services, including three routes between Morley and Leeds which combine to make a 10min service - First also runs every 10min on the route. Other services include an East Leeds-Moortown cross-city service, Crossgates-Bradford, White Rose shopping centre-Halton Moor, some Morley local services, and Leeds Suburban Buses services linking Leeds University, the city centre and Kirkstall, competing with First.

The deal is subject to approval by the Office of Fair Trading, which has promised to reach a decision within 40 days. "If it doesn't go through, we'll start a smaller business, but we'll need new premises", said Brian.

Picture: Eamonn Kentell

Only two companies expressed an interest in Black Prince, which is to be sold to First

The premises have been sold separately to a developer, though there is no planning permission as yet granted on the site, and the fleet will be advertised for sale. First had originally indicated it wanted to take 20 vehicles, but its recent O-Licence cut means it now has sufficient spare vehicles.

The fleet also includes some historic vehicles, including two Leyland PD3s, which are also up for sale - one of the two has a Class 6 MoT - while a unique twin-staircase Volvo Ailsa, built experimentally for London Transport and acquired by Black Prince after it had turned over in an accident, has just been rebuilt in an exercise taking some 13 years. It is to go to the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Trust's museum at Wythall, near Birmingham.

"We've had a good run," says Brian Crowther. First Leeds Marketing Manager Brian Donnelly said that as the matter was in the hands of the OFT he was unable to make "much more comment. It's very sensitive at the moment."

No frills airlines hit Eurotunnel

EUROTUNNEL has blamed the continuing effects of low-cost airlines combined with competition from ferries for a substantial drop in both its coach and passenger car traffic last year.

The operator of the Channel Tunnel carried 8% fewer cars and 12% fewer coaches in 2004. Truck carryings remained unchanged.

In the year ended 31 December 2004, only 63,467 coaches were carried on Eurotunnel shuttles. That compares with nearly 72,000 in 2003, a drop of 11.78%. Overall the cross-channel coach market declined by 4%.

The good news for Eurotunnel was provided by Eurostar and its rail freight division.

The number of passengers carried through the Channel Tunnel by Eurostar rose by 15% in 2004 to 7,276,675 passengers and rail freight tonnage carried increased by 8%.

Jean-Louis Raymond, Chief Executive, said: "The cross-Channel market has remained difficult for all operators, as it has for Eurotunnel. The improvement in Eurostar traffic over the last year has certainly been encouraging, but competitive pressure remains strong and the impact on the market of the development of 'no-frills' airlines is being felt ever more strongly."

According to Eurotunnel, full year operating revenues would be 4% lower than the previous year at £538million, with revenues from passenger and truck shuttles down 7% to £285milion.

A new passenger pricing strategy focusing on maximising value not volumes will be introduced for this season.

Stagecoach d

FOLLOWING annual growth of 7-8%, Stagecoach doubled the frequency of the Oxford-Cambridge service from hourly to every half hour from Monday (31 January).

Following growth of 5-6%, particularly over the Bedford-Milton Keynes section of the journey, extra short-workings had been introduced to give a half-hourly Bedford-Milton Keynes service, and the increased growth rate has made it possible to extend the half-hourly service through to Oxford and Cambridge. There is no parallel direct rail service.

At the same time, 15 mid-life Plaxton Expressliner-bodied Volvo B10Ms ex-National Express work have been refurbished and fitted with toilets for the route - for which a toilet drop has been installed at Bedford, where the coaches are based - and route branding has been created by Ray Stenning's Best Impressions. If the increase is successful, new coaches could follow after a couple of years.

Bookings for end-to-end journeys can be made on-line through megabus.com, and initially

First and East Thames lose out in London tendering

FIRST Capital, the East London part of First's operations, has lost out in the latest round of London service tendering.

It has lost routes 257 (Stratford-Walthamstow), 296 (Romford-Ilford) and one-bus school route 647 (Harold Hill-Gidea Park-Romford) to Stagecoach and shopping service 347 (Ockendon-Romford), which requires one single-decker, to Essex-based Blue Triangle of Rainham.

Transport for London has been concerned at First's performance in recent months and had warned First that it wouldn't get any more work until the problems were sorted out. However First has gained the 150 (Chigwell Row-Becontree Heath) from London Buses-owned East Thames Buses, using 11 new double-deckers, and regained a mobility route and route 339 (Old Ford-Shadwell), which requires three buses. East Thames also loses the 128 (Claybury-Romford) to Arriva London North, which will use 12 new double-deckers.

Stagecoach East London has also gained route 103 (Rainham-Romford-Chase Cross) from Arriva London North, which will require 12 new double-deckers.

Altogether the revised contracts, which come into effect in late-summer/autumn 2005, call for 83 new buses, all but two of them double-deckers, including 31 new buses for Arriva London South to replace Routemasters on route 159 (Streatham-Marble Arch) at the end of the year – likely to be the last Routemaster route in London.

However, 60 of the buses used on the new contracts will be existing vehicles, representing the on-going slow-down in the introduction of new buses to London services.

Share timekeeping problems, operators told

THE BUS Partnership Forum, set up by the Department for Transport to bring Government, operators and local authorities together to improve bus service performance, wants to see Punctuality Improvement Partnerships between local authorities and bus operators to solve problems of increasing traffic congestion on bus service reliability.

Partnerships aim to promote greater cooperation between operators, local authorities and Traffic Commissioners to ensure there is clarity about particular traffic problems.

It is also expected that the Traffic Commissioners will issue a new Practice Direction, which will give a more pragmatic approach to withholding Bus Service Operators' Grant for failure to comply with their 'window' of 95% of service running no more than five minutes' late or one minute early. Despite national press reports, the system of 'fining' operators for non-compliance not changed; the Traffic Commissioners can still withhold BSOG to the value of £550 per vehicle for worst cases.

Bus Users UK chairman Caroline Cahm told routeONE that the fact that "everyone is now encouraged to work together is a good step forward".

ubles Oxford-Cambridge

Picture: Ben Morroll

BIOMs have been refurbished and fitted with toilets for the increased service

five seats have been made available for meagbus.com bookings on each trip. Stagcoach East Managing Director Inglis Lyons told routeONE: "The beauty of a system like megabus is that it's very flexible; if we find we're selling more seats that way, we can increase the availability." It also enables the operator to utilise spare capacity on services where capacity has been increased.

Oxford Tube was incorporated into the megabus network when its new high-capacity Neoplans were introduced.

The Secretary of State says: "No"

Darling: "We will not go back to the old days"

IT IS THE most unequivocal statement yet, as the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling tells the industry that there are no plans to re-regulate bus services.

Speaking before an audience of 560 guests at the Confederation of Passenger Transport's Annual Dinner last Thursday, Mr Darling said: "Let me make one point clear. We will not look to return to the regulated world of the 1980s. Up and down the country, local authorities and bus companies can and do work together and there are countless examples where bus use has increased – Brighton, Oxford, Cambridge, York, Edinburgh, Glasgow. So we will not go back to the old days." Although Mr Darling was restating his position on re-regulation, the strength of this statement came as a surprise to operators, and clearly disappointed local authority representatives who are not pacified by the offer of greater control over bus services where they have "a comprehensive plan to improve transport."

Mr Darling put this offer in perspective, saying: "All such schemes have to be approved by me – and I will be looking for genuinely radical and comprehensive proposals to cut congestion. In particular I will not approve schemes simply because the bus companies and council don't get on. So there is a real opportunity here for you to build on what you have done."

Given the publicity generated by the Oassenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) regulate bus service campaign, Mr Darling's comments effectively shut the door on any further debate ahead of May's General Election.

Industry observers suggest that it was a kind of "holding speech," reflecting concern that the Government's position might change with the expected post-election ministerial reshuffle. It is known that there is strong support from top-level civil servants within the Department for Transport for bus service regulation and these siren noises will still be there after the Election.

Consequently there will be considerable interest in what the Labour Party manifesto has to say.

Nevertheless, the prospect of any change recedes significantly in the wake of Mr Darling's statement, and the industry is encouraged to believe that Labour has no real appetite for doing a u-turn. The degree of certainty provided by Mr Darling is not lost on the Stock Market where the big five bus groups are on a 12-month high.

As routeONE went to press the relevant prices were: Arriva 548.75p, First 369.25, Go-ahead 1,561p, National Express 903p and Stagecoach 119p.

UN backs TV bus campaign

THE INTERNATIONAL Association of Public Transport (UITP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have joined forces to promote the environmental and life-style benefits of public transport in a TV campaign.

The animated 30sec commercial, available in English, French, German and Spanish and produced by McCann Erickson, is scheduled to run across six international stations, starting with EuroNews from 10 February, to coincide with the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol on the 16th.

Transport is estimated to be responsible for 30% of CO^2 emissions in Europe, and greenhouse gas emissions from transport are growing faster than any other sector. In Europe, approximately 50% of urban trips are shorter than 5km.

Record year for VDL Group

THE VDL Group says that 2004 was a record year. Preliminary figures show turnover increased 7.5% to £634 million and profits went up 38% to £27m. In its coach and bus division, turnover was up slightly to £272m but "profits increased substantially" according to VDL. A total of 1,425 coaches and buses, 801 chassis and 361 converted mini and midi buses were delivered.

Bigger growth

FURTHER to the news item in routeONE 20 January concerning Blazefield's decision to buy more leather-seated buses, Blazefield chairman Giles Fearnley tells routeONE the growth on service 36 (Leeds-Harrogate-Ripon) since the introduction of new 'twin-deck' vehicles 12 months ago has been 15%, not 'over 10%', as we quoted.

French ban

THE FRENCH ban on carrying groups of schoolchildren on coaches takes place on Saturday 30 July from 0000-2400hrs.

Grantham deal imminent

Mike Morgan

THE UNCERTAINTY hovering over the Grantham bus network is expected to end as Leicester-based Centrebus completes the deal that will see it take over the local services relinquished by MASS Transit (routeONE, News, 27 January).

Managing Director, Peter Harvey, confirmed that subject to last minute hitches, legal completion will be in time for Centrebus to take over the Grantham operation on Monday (7 February).

The deal will include the lease on the Tollemarch Road (South) premises, an unspecified number of employees and eight MASS vehicles.

Mr Harvey said that the number of services taken over remained uncertain, pending the conclusion of talks with Lincolnshire County Council. However, he said: "We aim to give the people of Grantham the services they deserve."

The Grantham deal follows the rapid expansion by Centrebus into a medium-sized operator with some 40 vehicles based in Leicester and 60 vehicles in the Luton, Dunstable, St Albans area.

Mr Harvey, who joined Centrebus in March last year, explained the company's ambition. He said: "I've always felt that there is a market between the big groups and the small operator.

"We specialise in niche markets, going for local contracts and offering a more personal service.

"Sometimes small is good. Our decision making process is much quicker, while in some ways it gets easier as you get bigger because you employ people to do things for you."

Peter Harvey: "Centrebus specialises in niche markets"

Bush replacement trials successful

New bushes last four times longer

POLYBUSH says that trials with Travel West Midlands, testing a polyurethane replacement for the Volvo front wishbone cone bush, are a success.

The company says that analysis of failure patterns showed that the bush centre separated from its shell, allowing the springs or wishbones to move out of alignment, potentially leading to steering, braking and tyre wear problems. This is because rubber tears or the bond between rubber and metal fails.

Experience has shown that because urethane does not deteriorate like rubber, perishing and splitting is not a factor.

Polyurethane has huge tear strength, resisting impact with potholes or speed-humps and the bond to metal is stronger than the material itself.

Polybush says that in direct comparisons, its versions lasted roughly four times as long as rubber ones. Other operators have now joined Travel West Midlands in adopting the bushes for their fleet. The bush fits Volvo B6BLE, B10BLE, B10L and B7TL designs.

● For details contact Polybush: 01978 664316.

Cardiff and SYPTE join DNA spit-kit revolution

THE USE of DNA spit-kits has been rolled out in separate initiatives in Cardiff and the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTE) area, both publicly launched last Tuesday and supported by poster campaigns.

The kits are given to staff and contain swabs, evidence bags and gloves for the collection of a saliva sample for DNA analysis following a spitting attack – classed as an assault. The evidence is used by police to trace offenders through the national DNA database. If a match is not found, a record of the DNA will be stored and can be used to make an arrest in the future. Offenders face six months in prison and/or a £5,000 fine.

The Cardiff Community Safety Partnership initiative covers Cardiff Bus and Arriva Trains Wales and is the first on Welsh bus services. During 2004 there were 20 spitting assaults on Cardiff Bus staff. Over the last three years this figure has averaged an attack every two weeks.

In the SYPTE area, over 3,000 DNA kits have been issued in the initiative covering all 10 bus operators, including smaller companies plus Supertram conductors and interchange staff. All operators in the region, including schools contracts and community transport, have been invited to take part. The joint initiative is between the SAFE Partnership (Supporting A Friendly Environment on all types of public transport) and South Yorkshire Police.

Speaking on behalf of all bus and tram operators in South Yorkshire, Duncan Roberts, chairman of BOSSY (Bus Operators Serving South Yorkshire) said: "Although spitting incidents are rare on public transport, we want to keep it that way. Issuing DNA kits will help our staff to do their job well and feel safe at all times."

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The Genuine Alternative

More Meriden Taxibuses

THE HEART of England Taxibus flexible public transport system in the Meriden Gap area of the West Midlands has been increased to run on Sundays. New, larger vehicles were introduced last year.

Taxibus is funded by Centro and is available to people in and around Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden, Meriden, Knowle and Berkswell and will take passengers to Solihull, Coventry and Birmingham International. It carries more than 16,000 passengers a year and is operated by West Midlands Special Needs Transport Ltd.

Successor for Begg sought

THE DEPARTMENT for Transport is advertising for a successor to David Begg to chair the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT). Mr Begg retires at the end of March having served the maximum term allowed, since CfIT's creation in 1999. The post, with a five-days-a-month commitment, has a £30,000 salary. The Conservatives say they will scrap CfIT if they win the General Elelction.

757 is doubled

EVENING services are to be doubled on the blue ribbon coach service Green Line 757 operated by Arriva the Shires and Essex between Luton, London Luton Airport and central London. From 23 January there are two journeys per hour from 2000-0000hrs, plus extra night journeys at 0130hrs from Luton Airport and departures from Victoria at 0330hrs and 0405hrs.

Arriva training

HUNDREDS of managers and frontline supervisors at Arriva's UK Bus division have participated in 'people skills' sessions as part of a national training drive. The training covered communication with teams, motivating people, dealing with conflict and giving feedback.

Alexander Dennis offers low-floor school bus

Tom Black

ALEXANDER Dennis (ADL) is offering the first UK-built, fully DDA compliant, low-floor school bus.

Based on the 12.5 metre Enviro300, with a three-plus-two seating, it provides 60 seats, all with belts and optional wheelchair layouts.

Discussions are "well advanced with a number of authorities" and ADL expects the first vehicles to go into production in early summer for delivery before the new school term in September.

Jim Hastie, Chief Executive of Alexander Dennis told routeONE: "FirstGroup, in particular, has proved in recent years that the yellow school bus is a winning concept.

Government research demonstrates that parents and pupils like the idea of dedicated yellow bus services.

"We believe they will grow in popularity and that yellow school buses are here to stay. The Enviro300 is a tried and proven bus that can offer 60 seats, all with safety belts. It is lightweight, strong and fuel efficient, and with clever packaging we have made it cost-effective for school purposes. The development process has involved discussions with education authorities and key operators in this field. This has given us a remarkable insight into the demands and expectations in this sensitive arena of operations."

The Enviro 300 meets DDA without the complications of a wheelhair lift, and offers the magic 60 seats

In marketing the new-look Enviro300, ADL has developed a support package of schools literature, CDs and videos, that offer teachers, pupils and parents a comprehensive learning package on travel safety.

Jim Hastie added: "Offering the right vehicle is only one part of the equation. Introducing a new culture to school transport and child safety is an integral part of the whole process and our support package aims to make an important contribution to that objective."

Bristol's new bus station revealed

ARTISTS impressions and details about Bristol's new £28 million bus and coach station have been announced by First and development partners Mowlem and Support Services.

Due to open this autumn, it will revitalise the city's public transport gateway. More than 1.2 million people use buses to the station, along with 70 National Express coach departures and 48 Bristol International Airport Flyer services a day.

State-of-the-art facilities, include electronic information displays, an enclosed pedestrian concourse, with fully glazed doors, ticket office and new toilets, staff canteen and offices.

There will also be a new link to shops. A temporary bus station has been operating since November within the main bus station site.

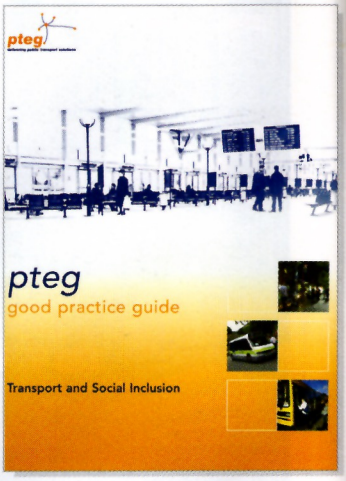
State-of-the-art facilities are promised

PTEG promotes social inclusion

AS 'accessibility planning' is an essential ingredient in the next round of Local Transport Plans, the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) has produced a good practice guide to transport and social inclusion.

Of the 100 most deprived areas in the country, 84 are in the areas covered by the PTEs, and while the report highlights innovative services already in place within the PTEs, there is a clear message of PTEG's dislike of the current regime. It says PTEs have been trying to address social inclusion issues "within the limitations of a deregulated bus market" and blames high fares on a "weak; regulatory framework."

The report covers demand-responsive services in each of the PTE areas designed at tacking social exclusion and also covers 'soft' projects such as Merseytravel's Travel Safe initiative, a project in Greater Manchester to train children with behavioural problems to use public transport in Greater Manchester and one in Barnsley, run in partnership with the local NHS Trust, to produce a map of how to get to places that sell healthy, affordable food from areas of social depravation.



The report can be downloaded from: www.pteg.net/socialinclusion.htm

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Largest-ever Volvo order

THREE operators in Santiago, Chile, have placed a joint order for 1,667 buses from Volvo. It is the single largest-ever order for Volvo Buses. They will be used in Santiago's new network system that includes dedicated bus lanes in the largest-ever project to modernise public transport in South America.

The order is for 1,157 B9SALF articulated buses and 510 B7RLE single deckers. The articulated chassis will be built at Volvo's plant in Brazil, with its Swedish site building the B7RLEs. Bodies are coming from three Brazilian companies, Marcopolo, Induscar/Caio and Busscar. Deliveries will start in June and continue to February 2006.

Death charge

A COACH driver has appeared in Leicester Crown Court charged with causing death by dangerous driving, after a 20-year-old man fell under the wheels of his National Express coach as it left Leicester bus station in October 2003.

The court heard that the driver, Andrew Hessey, 34, of Alfreton, Derbyshire, ignored the man who was running alongside the vehicle as it left. He pleaded not guilty. The case continues.

Driver in court

A COACH driver has appeared in court charged with causing death by dangerous driving of a five-year-old boy last January.

Kevin Barnes, 41, of St Leger Crescent, St Thomas, Swansea, pleaded not guilty at Swansea Crown Court. He was driving a Brian Isaacs coach on the A4138 between Llanelli and Llangennech.

The boy was travelling in a Ford Galaxy with his family, when it was hit by the coach, which pushed it into a lorry.

Westminster relaxes coach pick-up and set-down rule

Mike Morgan

IN A ground-breaking agreement Westminster City Council (WCC) and the London Tourist Coach Operators Association (LTCOA) with the support of Transport for London (TfL) and the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT) have reached an agreement to allow coaches a 10-minute window for picking up and setting down outside tourist attractions, hotels and the like within the borough.

This concession has been agreed by WCC after concerns were raised by the LTCOA and the coach industry in general, through TfL, that coach drivers were finding it increasingly difficult to carry out their duties within London.

WCC emphasise that this is a concession and must not be taken as an entitlement or a change in the regulations. The "10-minute window" will only apply where a loading ban is not in place. Where such a ban does exist then immediate setting down or picking up only will be allowed.

The 10-minute rule has in part been agreed due to increasing concerns for the environment. Coach drivers parked in Westminster, loading or setting down, must do so with their engines turned off.

Mark Anderson, Chairman of the LTCOA, is delighted with the new concession. "Having attended all of the meetings along with Darek Podwiazka from TfL held with WCC over this difficult subject, I was impressed with the willingness of the Council to both listen to, and then act upon our industry concerns."

Bob Pilbeam, CPT's Coach Consultant said, "I am extremely encouraged by WCC's positive approach to coach issues over the last 18 months, and we as an industry must respond by complying with their conditions."

TfL's Darek Podwiazka is anxious to emphasise that this is only a beginning, as Transport for London is endeavouring to develop similar "agreements" with other London boroughs in the near future.

Hertfordshire confirms Intalink commitment

One bus from each of the main Intalink partners has been painted in a special livery to promote Plusbus Bus/Rail tickets; this is Centrebus's Dart at Hatfield station

HERTFORDSHIRE County Council has affirmed its commitment to the Intalink marketing of public transport services in the county.

Intalink is partnership of bus and rail operators and local authorities in the county, aimed at promoting services and integrated ticketing. It was launched in 1999 and has achieved availability of Arriva's Explorer ticket on all Intalink operators and has been at the forefront of promoting the joint rail/bus Plusbus scheme.

A new Intalink agreement was signed last year, with a commitment to improving marketing and ticketing and to improve electronic information systems, with bus stop information by text and a forthcoming real-time system. It is also committed to increasing the number of Hertfordshire railway stations in the Plusbus scheme; there are already 28 stations involved.

Marketing will be more specifically targeted at particular user groups, including the increased use of Plusbus season tickets to reduce car use to railheads.

Hertfordshire is the first county to offer Plusbus season tickets. Speaking at the relaunch of Intalink in Hatfield last week, Transport Minister Charlotte Atkins said the importance of the bus was often overlooked. "Simplicity is key," she said, "and integration is vital to give people, non-users in particular, confidence in using public transport services."

Minister Charlotte Atkins presented awards to station staff for success in selling PlusBus tickets, in this case to St Albans

Crime investigation boost for Nottingham

NOTTINGHAM'S Respect for Transport Group is planning a special investigations team to deal with anti-social behaviour on buses and trams in Nottingham.

The Group involves Nottingham City Transport, tram managers, Nottingham City Council, Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership and bus shelter contractor JC Decaux. It plans to start recruiting investigators for a unit to deal with property damage and anti-social behaviour on public transport in Greater Nottingham. More serious crimes like assault and robbery will be still investigated by the police.

The new unit will probably be based at a police station and ultimately have around six staff. It will cost up to £200,000 a year. Similar schemes already operate in Manchester and Birmingham.

There were 32 assaults and 13 spitting incidents against Nottingham City Transport staff between 1 April and 8 December 2004.

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Your routeONE

Harrogate's Connexions

HARROGATE Coaches is providing an 8.5-metre Optare Solo for a route No.1 run under the Connexions banner.

Route C1 runs from Askham Bar to Tadcaster, and lives up to its branding by connecting the North Yorkshire villages of Acaster Malbis, Appleton Roebuck and Bolton Percy, which lie south of the A64 trunck road between Tadcaster and York.

Craig Temple of Harrogate Coaches told routeONE that the vehicle in question is a normal width former Optare demonstrator – hence the silver and blue livery.

However, he admits that a Slimline Solo would have been ideal for the rural roads used by the service, but a vehicle was required at short notice when the C1 service was taken over from Adam Askew's York Country Buses.

Mr Temple said: "Adam used Plaxton Pointer Darts on the service.

"The Solo is extremely popular with the customers, many of whom are elderly."

Mr Temple added: "Adam drives on the service for me, and I think he is enjoying less stress than he previously had!"

The bus operates six days a week and covers approximately 250 miles per day.

Mr Temple said: "So far it has proved to be very reliable and averages 14-15 mpg."

New Geminis launch £1m fast TWM route

Tom Black

TRAVEL West Midlands launched its new £1m Walsall-Birmingham Premier 997 service on Sunday (30 January).

Divisional Corporate Affairs Director Phil Bateman told routeONE: "We hope this new premier service will begin to attract car users back onto public transport. This limited stop, fast timetable service will see nine brand new Wrights Gemini double-deckers on the route, all of which have our latest CrystalEyes multi-media CCTV technology fitted for the benefit of our customers and have semi-coach seating giving an enhanced seat pitch."

The service was launched to the public last Thursday, at various locations along the route, and joining TWM for the launch were WMPTA Chairman Cllr Gary Clarke and the Leader of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Cllr Tom Ansell, plus a jazz band.

Premier 997 operates every 20 minutes from Walsall to Birmingham via Aldridge in peak periods. Off-peak, the 997 switches to Aldridge-Birmingham direct on a 20 minute frequency. During the evenings and on Sundays, it operates hourly.

At the launch of the 977 Walsall-Birmingham service were (l-r): Dave Donaldson (TWM General Manager, Walsall), Cllr Gary Clarke (Chairman, WMPTA) and Martin Hancock (Marketing & Development Director TWM)

TfL say fuel-cell Citaros "are a success"

INITIAL tests of zero-emission buses on route RV1 have been a success, says Transport for London (TfL).

Three hydrogen fuel-cell Mercedes-Benz Citaro buses, costing £4m, are being tested on First's route RV1 (Covent Garden-Tower Gateway).

During 2004 they ran 23,000 miles and nearly 3,400 operating hours, with managers "more than satisfied with their reliability."

"London Buses regards the first year of the two-year fuel-cell bus project a great success," said London Buses' Mike Weston. "The buses have excelled in reliability."

The project is part of a wider European trial with 30 zero emission hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, costing £90m, being tested over two years in 10 capital cities. Launched onto route 25 in December 2003, they transferred to the RV1 in September 2004 where they are used between 0730-1430hrs on weekdays. The trial ends in January 2006.

Heritage Corner

Rare RT joins RM farewell

ANYONE with the remotest interest in the passenger transport scene will be fully aware that 2005 will go down in history as the last year of normal Routemaster operation in London. And, if you believe everything you read in the *Evening Standard*, they will be sadly missed.

Meanwhile the countdown to the final RM is already underway as Transport for London ploughs ahead with the Capital's bus fleet upgrade that will see all vehicles wheelchair accessible.

The most recent service to switch from RM to low-floor double-deckers was Go-Ahead's 36.

The last 36 RM entered New Cross garage at the end of service on Friday 28 January, and, as is now becoming the custom, that day's runnings included some guest appearances by heritage vehicles.

However, the biggest surprise of the day was created by one of London's best kept secrets.

Guest RMs are one thing, and guest RTs or RTLs are even more special, but nobody expected one of the rarest of the rare… a Cravens-bodied RT.

It is believed that only two out of the 120 Cravens RTs exist, and they're both owned by renowned bus dealer and operator, Ensign Bus of Purfleet.

Ensign pulled out the stops to get RT1431 of May 1949 through repaint and MoT in time for it to appear on the streets of London for the first time in since 1956. It was driven in service by Operations Director Ross Newman.

Our picture shows the bus after its return to Ensign's new 95,000 sq ft premises on the Purfleet Industrial Estate.

It may appear to be a standard RT from the front, but closer examination reveals RT1431's real historic interest

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Reducing the number of 'justs'...

SOME research from Will Murray of Interactive Driving Systems (which helps companies improve driver techniques) crossed The Whisperer's desk. Apparently, 18% of insurance claims are for 'hit while parked' or related incidents, also known in the trade as 'justs': "Boss I've 'just' noticed some damage on my vehicle but I'm not sure how it got there!"

The serious point is that the majority of fleet vehicle insurance claims happen at low speed, and that parking and manoeuvring is worthy of more attention by the industry.

During research, the project sponsor in a client company was identified as having made such a claim himself. He admitted 'off the record' that the incident actually involved his wife crashing his company car as she was manoeuvring in their own driveway. He said the easiest way for him to get a 'no questions asked repair' was to report it as 'a damage whilst parked incident'. Interestingly, he has since won a major safety award for helping the company to implement the much more rigorous internet-enabled incident reporting, investigation and recording program developed as part of the project!

Those insurance ads

WHEN slumped on their couch in front of the 'goggle box' Mr and Mrs Whisperer soon tire of all those ads for car insurance, but the ads are also a useful source of revenue for bus companies, so The Whisperer's not knocking it.

However, The Whisperer raised a smile at this picture, taken the other week at Walsall's Bradford Place bus station. The bus back ad seems rather relevant. A misunderstanding between drivers over who had the right of way led to this situation. In the event there wasn't any serious damage and no injuries (apart to pride, perhaps) and the buses were soon on their way. As is The Whisperer for another week...

Picture: Paul Godding

Have you got any industry whispers?

The Whisperer has an ear for industry gossip. Funny, serious, or just tongue-in-cheek, please pass it on. Discretion is assured! If you've heard any rumours then let me know with a quick e-mail: the.whisperer@route-one.net or care of mike.morgan@route-one.net

Letters

The Editor would be delighted to receive your opinions either by e-mail: mike.morgan@route-one.net or fax: 0870 241 8891 or by post to: Mike Morgan, Editor, routeONE, Expo Publishing, Suite 4, Century House, Towermead Business Park, Fletton, Peterborough PE2 9DY

PLABS – I agree

Letter of the WEEK

I COULD NOT agree more with Stephen Morris (routeONE, route 101, 13 January). The notion of 'no hands, no bus' might well be enshrined in 1970s, *On The Buses*-type folklore, but has no place in modern business.

Stephen makes an appeal to operators to cover the protocol in training.

I thought that an extract from our long-standing training manual and handbook for drivers would be of interest.

"Stopping for customers – We are in the business of carrying passengers, and we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. Always keep a sharp lookout for intending passengers and never assume that just because your bus is not hailed that the people waiting at the stop do not want to catch it – this will never be accepted as an excuse. Some people may be strangers to the area or new customers not sure of your destination or route. Some may have difficulty reading the destination display. Whatever the reason, always make sure.

"In areas where bus stops are not located at frequent intervals, you may pick up and set down anywhere on request provided it is safe to do so. On some routes we only stop at selected stops in order to offer a faster journey. Such sections and/or routes will be clearly marked in the timetable.

"Customers should be allowed to board the bus on the basis of first-come-first served unless you have instructions to the contrary.

"Never pass another bus which has pulled up at a bus stop without first making sure that no-one wants to board your bus.

"For safety reasons standing passengers must not travel on the platform.

"If you are forced to leave anyone behind report this as soon as you can."

Melvyn Hopwood,
Head of Communications,
TrentBarton, Heanor, Derbyshire

Wheelchair secured incorrectly

I WAS READING your magazine and was interested in the article on risk assessment (routeONE, accessPLUS, 20 January).

I run with my husband a minibus firm in Lincoln and we specialise in the transportation of wheelchair users. I noticed in the picture on page 13 that the wheelchair has been secured down incorrectly. Surley for someone who is advising us about safety and how to move wheelchairs and use tail lifts, they themselves ought to know how to secure a wheelchair down?

Even though the chair is unoccupied, the front straps are fastened around the foot plate (these swing out). The strap on the left side is wrapped around the wrong way (it should go inside out). There are no restraints on the back of the chair, so should this vehicle suddenly brake the whole chair would tip forward and could cause a serious injury to other passengers or the driver.

Even if the pictures are for demonstration purposes only, surely they should be correct if they are being made an example of?

This is not the first time I have noticed that wheelchair examples have shown to be incorrectly secured.

On a more positive note, we find your magazine very useful and informative and are regular readers.

Natasha Chambers,
TC's Cabs & Mini Buses,
Lincoln

Public Inquiry sounds alarm bells

JUST A SHORT point of matters arising to the closure of Rush Travel Ltd, Newcastle upon Tyne, in January (routeONE, News, 13 January).

As an operator, I am astonished that the Traffic Commissioner, Tom Macartney, has chosen this way of action. The point I am making is that I believe that this Public Inquiry was not for maintenance reasons, but for the carrying of football supporters to away games.

As you may be aware, this trend adopted by Mr Macartney must send alarm bells ringing to every operator facing a public enquiry.

I could understand, that if Mr Macartney had cut Rush Travel's O-licence say by four or five discs then you would say yes, he has made an example of them. But the true picture relates to the carrying of football supporters. If Newcastle United can afford to pay Northumbria Police officers to travel to every away game, why can't the officers be at the pick up point to search all the supporters for carrying alcohol when boarding the coach? How can you expect a driver to search a member of the public when you know what the answer is going to be? So I call for some common sense and ask why did Mr Macartney take this course of action and, let's remind ourselves, the closure of a business and loss of jobs.

A very concerned operator

Parents should take responsibility

I READ with great interest the article 'A lesson from the USA' (routeONE, accessPLUS, 20 January) and their approach to the disabled access of their vehicles. They not only looked at what the disabled wanted or needed, the government then looked into what the provider wanted or needed to provide the service.

Our company relies a lot on school contracts but do we have to tolerate a lot of vandalism and general bad behaviour. Once again, we could follow the USA in their simple plan, forcing parents to take responsibility. Each child is allocated a seat and the parents sign a form of contract for that seat. Any problems and the parents are contacted and made to pay for any damage done. Maybe it works well over there because children start using the school bus from the first day of their school lives, so they are taught to sit in their seat with a seat belt on and to remain there until they arrive at school or home.

County Councils all over the country could do the same without too much effort. I feel very strongly about this point as the company as a whole – drivers and office staff – are fed up with the abuse we have to take from children and parents alike.

Julia A Sims, Transport Manager, Town & Country Coaches Ltd, Newton Abbot, Devon

Cleanliness suggestions are just not practical

I AM WRITING with regard to the article on the importance of keeping coaches and buses clean by Solicitor and former Traffic Commissioner John Mervyn Pugh (routeONE, Keeping Out of Trouble, 6 January). This article follows his previous piece about the changes in Financial Standing, which he claimed may well see the demise of the small operator. It appears to me that he is knocking the small operator again when he suggests that expensive bus washes and chemicals are the answer to ensuring vehicle cleanliness. Does he not realise that at certain times of the year it is impossible to keep vehicles clean? My coaches are washed morning and evening every day, yet I know that by 0900hrs they are filthy. It's all because of the state of the roads. Another of Mr Pugh's suggestions is that we ask passengers to collect rubbish in plastic bags attached to each seat. This is simply not practical when the vehicle is used as a school bus. Mr Pugh also commends drivers in uniform. He should be aware that a corporate identity costs money, yet the rates on offer for private hire and school contracts barely cover the essential operating costs.

Rhodri Evans, Ffoshelig Coaches, Carmarthenshire

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Abbeyways licence

Traffic Commissioner considered Abbeyways was overstretched and would cope with the maintenance of older coaches better with fewer vehicles

HALIFAX coach operator Steven Ives, trading as Abbeyways, had his licence cut from seven to five vehicles when he appeared at his second Public Inquiry at which vehicle maintenance was an issue, within 12 months.

Mr Ives had been called before North Eastern Traffic Commissioner Tom Macartney at a Leeds Public Inquiry because of concern over an unsatisfactory maintenance investigation, a number of prohibition notices and convictions.

Vehicle Examiner Michael Brown said that five prohibitions had been issued since a previous Public Inquiry in May 2004 and there had been a fire on a vehicle in service. The ownership of two prohibited vehicles was disputed; one had been issued with an 'S'-marked prohibition at annual test.

Mr Brown carried out a maintenance investigation in June following a complaint from Norris Thorpe Junior & Infant School when the windscreen wipers failed on the M1 on a school trip. Later that day he was informed by a police officer of a skid incident involving an Abbeyways vehicle. Three vehicles were examined and two delayed prohibitions and a defect notice were issued.

Abbeyways contracted out maintenance, and vehicles were inspected every six to eight weeks. Records were now kept at a separate office, as the operating centre had had flood problems in the past. Mr Ives carried out the daily walk-round checks himself; drivers were only instructed to check the oil and water. Two of the recent prohibitions were for driver-related defects.

Mr Brown agreed that Mr Ives was disputing that a defective tyre listed on an 'S'-marked delayed prohibition issued in Lancashire had tread below the legal limit. He also agreed that there was a common problem of emergency glass hammers being stolen. He said that his main concern was that prohibitions were still being issued for items that should be reported by drivers. There was nothing wrong with Mr Ives carrying out the daily walk-round checks, but he felt that drivers might be unclear about what they should be doing and it caused confusion at the roadside, leading to the issue of an 'S'-marked prohibition when a driver told an examiner that all he did was check the oil and water.

In reply to the Commissioner, Mr Brown said that one of the two vehicles where ownership was disputed had been in the livery of Abbotts of Blackpool, the other in Abbeyways livery.

Mr Ives said he had nine operational vehicles. Drivers were now instructed always to carry a spare emergency glass hammer. Last September he had been given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £85 costs by Batley Magistrates for failing to display an O-licence disc. The driver had changed over a defective vehicle at the garage, but forgot to swap the licence disc over. No immediate prohibitions had been issued to vehicles in service, either in the yard or on the road. He thought that a conviction for not having legal lettering on a coach was in relation to a vehicle that had been repainted.

Vehicle maintenance was contracted out to D & M Garside, who were very experienced, said Mr Ives. He hired a couple of vehicles from that firm's proprietor Derek Garside from time to time, one of which he thought was in Abbotts' livery, the other was in Abbeyways livery.

Asked about the complaint from Norris Thorpe School, Mr Ives said he had spoken to the driver, who felt it was safe to continue to Woodall Services, about three miles away. He then went out to the service area and rectified the problem, which was a blown fuse. However, the leader of the school party did not wish to carry on with the trip. Mr Ives had hired a coach from a local firm in Sheffield to take the party home, but the school decided not to use it and hired their own coach.

They dealt with complaints as best they could, said Mr Ives. He added: "In this day and age we unfortunately live in a society who complain. We have professional complainers who try to get a free trip and we have to sort them out from the genuine complaints." David Brooke, the driver of the coach, said that the trip leaders seemed to be out to find fault from the outset. There had been two complaints even before the party boarded the coach. He had decided to go on to the service area rather than having 45 under-11s milling about on the hard shoulder, getting soaked in the rain.

Mr Ives considered that he had complied with undertakings given on the last occasion. He felt that they had done a lot better since he had been doing the daily walk-round checks himself. He considered that they were running a much tighter ship then they had prior to the last Public Inquiry. It was impossible to run a totally fault-free fleet, maintained Mr Ives. He said that the drivers checked over the vehicles themselves if he was not there and they had been shown the VI video in relation to daily walk-round checks.

Commenting on a vehicle found to have two finger-loose wheelnuts, the Commissioner said that he had to assume there was a danger of a wheel detachment. In the last 12 months 20 people had been killed by detached road wheels. Mr Ives said that that incident had been in 1999 and expert evidence was that the wheel would not have become detached. There had not even been a suggestion of possible wheel detachment since.

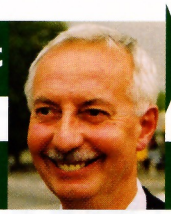
In reply to the Commissioner, Mr Ives said that a complaint about smoke coming from the brakes of a vehicle on an excursion to Bakewell was due to the driver coming down a notoriously steep hill on the brakes which overheated, when he would have been better in a lower gear. There was no suggestion that the brakes were not working.

Derek Garside said he would undertake the daily walk-round checks if Mr Ives wasn't there for any reason. The vehicle with the loose wheelnuts had gone through the MoT test a fortnight previously and had been parked up since. He tested the wheelnuts that morning with a wheelbrace and they had come loose during the journey. The pass rate at annual test was 90%, which he felt was very good. It was impossible to get 100%, as different people looked for different things.

Tom Macartney: "20 people kille

He had bought a number of vehicles when Abbotts had stopped trading, and hired them out to other operators as well as Abbeyways. Two of the vehicles were painted in Abbeyways livery and were hired out only to Mr Ives.

After the Commissioner had said that there were one or two areas where there was scope for improvement, given the age of the fleet, Mr Ives agreed to conditions being imposed on the licence that any vehicles used by the firm would be inspected at intervals of not less than six weeks, that roller brake tests would be undertaken every three months, and that the daily defect checks would be carried out either by himself or Mr Garside. He gave an undertaking to have an annual test pass rate target of 90%.



cut

detached road wheels in a year"

Cutting the licence, the Commissioner said he felt that Mr Ives was over-stretched by the size of the current fleet. There was nothing wrong with operating older vehicles, but they needed much more care and attention.

Central Travel restriction to remain

A restriction on the licence of Central Travel, Liverpool, is to remain until May so that it can concentrate on improving maintenance arrangements

WHITEFIELD Centre Ltd, of 15 Whitefield Road, Liverpool, which trades as Central Travel, was called before North Western Traffic Commissioner Beverley Bell at a St Helens Public Inquiry because of concerns over vehicle maintenance.

Central holds a licence for five vehicles, but a condition limiting the number of vehicles that can operate at any one time to three is to remain until 27 May.

The hearing had been adjourned from December to enable the company to produce three months' maintenance records. Vehicle examiner Carl Hilton had told the Commissioner that two prohibitions had been issued during a maintenance check, there was no evidence of a forward planner or of a written driver defect reporting system and he was concerned about the lack of covered facilities to inspect the underside of vehicles.

When the hearing continued, Mr Hilton said the maintenance records produced, two sheets for each of three vehicles, showed they were being inspected every eight weeks. Apart from the year not being included on the majority of the sheets, they appeared satisfactory. There was now a forward-planning chart, but he had not seen any evidence of written driver defect reports which, he was told, were thrown away after defects had been rectified.

In reply to the Commissioner, Mr Hilton said that no prohibition notices had been issued since the last hearing. He was happy with the eight-week inspection intervals, provided the drivers' daily walk-round checks were carried out properly. Director and CPC holder Monis Aljawadi said that a previous vehicle examiner had said that the driver defect reporting system was not working properly, but that was only his opinion.

Asked how the brakes were tested, Mr Aljawadi replied that they were checked visually by opening the drum. He added that they had found the brake tester could give a 100% efficiency reading even if there was a defect. He did not feel he needed a maintenance contract with the mobile fitter carrying out the company's maintenance, as he used the company's premises and facilities. They couldn't get a ramp into the garage, he said, because of the height of the roof.

Beverley Bell: told there was no driver defect reporting system

In reply to the Commissioner, he said that he had coped with running three vehicles so far, but didn't think he would be content to continue with just three. There were rumours that a supermarket wanted his land. If that happened, he would buy new premises with a custom-built workshop and buy more buses. He wanted to go back to five vehicles in the summer.

After receiving an undertaking that Mr Aljawadi would attend an operators' seminar by the end of July, the Commissioner indicated that the condition would remain in place until 27 May. This would allow Mr Aljawadi to build on the work in regard to forward planning and the new maintenance regime, she said. She would be asking VOSA to carry out a licence performance review at some stage in the future.

No action against Keith operator

NO ACTION was taken against the licence held by William W. Smith & Partners, trading as Central Garage, Keith, when they appeared before Scottish Deputy Traffic Commissioner Richard McFarlane at an Aberdeen Public Inquiry over maintenance standards.

He gave them 10 days to produce further evidence of their financial standing, with confirmation of the value of shares held.

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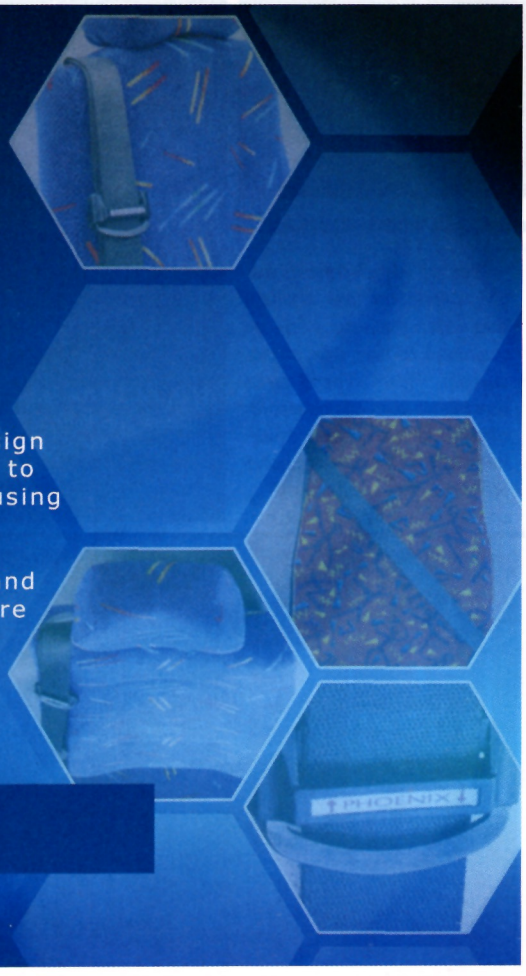
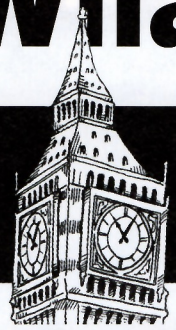


What they're proposing



Like it or not, disabled access on all touring coaches is coming however much the industry says "no". But it can fight for introduction over a reasonable timescale. But this topic is not one on which the forthcoming General Election is going to be fought, our mole in Westminster predicts

IT'S ELECTION, election, election (as the oriental Viagra salesman was heard to say) again this week; and we are afraid that it will be all the way up to 5 May – allegedly. So as the election approaches, we must turn our minds to what is likely to be in the various parties' manifestos.

For their part, the Tories are being pretty up front already with their election headlines. The week before it was waste; last week it is immigration. Nobody could accuse them of not going for the populist angle – but then they thought that they had caught the mood of the nation with their "Keep The Pound" campaign last time. We all know what happened then!

It is not routeONE's place to debate the rights and wrongs of immigration policies. There is little doubt however that the Tory stance will touch a chord with many voters. But is that enough?

In one of Westminster Watch's first columns we opined that personalities were more important than policies in winning votes. And we suspect that the Tories will suffer as a result of this.

We hear that most of the private polling carried out by all parties shows that a great number of the electorate actually agree with current Tory policies. But it's the party itself that the people don't like. The truth of the matter seems to be that, no matter what they say, Mr Howard and his team are just not electable.

Of course this could all change if they came up with some imaginative proposals to help the coach and bus industries. But for some reason they do not seem to share routeONE's view of the important role that our industry plays. Come to think of it, neither do the voters!

Which probably means that transport will not be hugely prominent in their manifesto – nor indeed anybody else's for that matter!

But surely there will be something. Here we go again then; another round of routeONE predictions. Will we never learn?

Michael Howard: will probably go with pro-car agenda

Tony Blair: likely to major on public services

Labour will fight shy of re-regulating the buses (that is not to say however that they won't do it once they are returned to power). Mr Darling is a sensible politician who knows that public money could be better spent elsewhere. We would be surprised therefore if he let anything of this nature through into the manifesto no matter what the various policy forums might have put forward. We will discuss what his successor's plans might be (assuming that he moves onwards and upwards after the election) at a later date.

So what will be in?

Well, following the success of the scheme in Wales and Scotland, do not be surprised if a national concessionary fares scheme for England is included.

On the coach front, the Government is committed to full accessibility. The industry will just have to accept this. It has two choices. It can fight against it and have regulations imposed against its will – for this is an argument that cannot be won – or it can maintain an ongoing dialogue with government and have regulations brought in over a sensible timescale. Whilst to many this comes into the category of a "no brainer," there is no doubt that the feeling of some in the industry will remain "just say no."

But we digress. Generally, it looks a safe bet that Labour's manifesto will major on provision of public services.

As we have said, the Tories are unlikely to go big on anything on the public transport front, but will probably go with pro-car agenda as espoused by the *Mail* and the *Sun*.

The Lib Dems will no doubt wish to bring all public transport under public control, but will only put up the taxes of the rich fat cats to pay for it.

And finally, does is matter? Will anybody actually read the manifestos? Will the manifesto of the winning party act as the template for its legislative programme?

Discuss!

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Success!

The result of many meetings involving Karen Magill, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Independent Coach Operators Association (NIICOA), operators, government departments and the Community Transport Association, is the launch this month of a Partnership Agreement

Karen Magill: NIICOA Chief Exec

THERE is so much going on everyday in our industry in Northern Ireland that it is difficult to keep up with all that is happening in the transport industry in the rest of the UK and further afield.

We all encounter many problems day-to-day, but one area which private operators did not expect to have problems with was Community Transport.

Community Transport came relatively late to Northern Ireland compared with the rest of the UK and the real boost for its development came in the late 1990s with the new Rural Transport Fund which provided specific funding for community transport. In Northern Ireland there are currently 18 Rural Community Transport Partnerships and during 2003/2004 they received funding of £1,078,857.

Generally, there are very few problems between the private sector and the partnerships. Indeed, in some areas, private operators actively work with the partnerships and are even represented on their committees while in other areas there is little or no communication or competition between them.

However, for several years there have been a handful of the community transport partnerships that have caused considerable trouble for some of our members.

These partnerships, whether through improper training, ignorance or blatant disregard for the rules, are not acting in accordance with their permits. Most of the complaints we have from our members concern the deliberate manipulation of the membership criteria to allow the partnerships to carry ineligible groups and members of the general public. Not only is this contradicting the whole ethos of why community transport was set up, but the fact that these partnerships are subsidised by government and are unfairly competing for commercial business against private operators – under a permit scheme which exempts them from the complex checks of a Road Service Licence – is wrong and unfair competition.

As an Association, the Northern Ireland Independent Coach Operators Association (NIICOA) has always believed that there is great potential for partnership and integration between our sector and the community transport partnerships, to improve local transport provision and to develop joint projects. So in an effort to further this, we contacted the Community Transport Association (CTA) in Northern Ireland, the Department of Regional Development (DRD) and the Department of the Environment (DoE), and set up a meeting where it was agreed by all parties that some form of working partnership agreement was the way forward to achieve our aims.

It has not been an easy task and it has taken a lot of hard work and many meetings between myself, Brain Myles of the Community Transport Association and various operators from both sectors to get to where we are today. One of the major obstacles we had to overcome were the many grey areas within the 10B Permit but the agreed guidelines which form part of the agreement will help clarify these and establish good working relationships. The path to here has also helped us develop a clear understanding of the different ethos and priorities between our two sectors and we are delighted to announce that our Partnership Agreement will be launched this month.

What makes this so much more important for us is the involvement of the DRD and DoE and their endorsement of the agreement. Both agencies have been heavily involved at crucial times. This endorsement by the licensing authority and funders of the partnerships adds the weight needed to ensure compliance and accountability. Both NIICOA and CTA are committed to making this partnership work and believe that together we will deliver a high quality, reliable local transport service for those who need it most. We are all very excited about the future and we believe that by working together, our common goals will be achieved more easily. It is also very fulfilling to sit back and think of what we have achieved and also to realise that at least one agreement has been successfully negotiated in Northern Ireland.

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You can be among

The first routeONE Excellence Awards is on Wednesday 5 October. Mike Morgan sets the scene for a prestige evening event that aims to reward coach and bus operators

NOW is the time to start thinking about what makes your business, and your managers, exceptional. Then you will be prepared to make a compelling entry for the first routeONE Excellence Awards, which is geared to raising standards and rewarding the best in coach and bus operation.

All 11 categories in the routeONE Excellence Awards 2005 are for coach and bus operators. This prestige event is guaranteed to inject a feel-good factor into the industry as a whole and those who take part in particular. There are genuine benefits for the winners, including an exclusive trophy, framed certificate and extensive coverage in routeONE. In addition, we will provide a PR package to help not only the winners promote their success, but also those on the shortlist.

Presentation of the Awards will be at a gala dinner held at the National Motorcycle Museum on the evening of 5 October, partners will be welcome. It will, therefore, coincide with the Coach & Bus Live show scheduled for 5 and 6 October at the adjacent National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham.

Consequently there will be two major events that will tie-together conveniently for show exhibitors and visitors alike.

"Two major events will tie together conveniently"

We expect a full-house at the National Motor Museum to hear the names of those who have been judged top in their field. But the whole industry will share this celebration of excellence.

Competition for the 11 categories is guaranteed to be intense because there will be real value in taking part. Not only will it aid the process of improving your own business, but it will also encourage you to stop and think about how and what you have achieved.

The routeONE Excellence Awards are specifically for coach and bus operators, providing an opportunity to put you and your company in the running for the ultimate accolade of being voted the best in the business.

The entry process starts next week and you will have until the end of April to complete and return a questionnaire. We will not make the process onerous, but we will be asking some pertinent questions. Our main concerns cover the following

- what has been achieved in the recent past
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Don't forget. The routeONE Excellence Awards will honour the best in a variety of categories for both coach and bus operators, with the opportunity too for coach and bus managers to shine.

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"The routeONE Excellence Awards is a timely event for showing our appreciation of coach operators. It's the right time and the right place for expressing our support for all coach operators, and in particular those who are rewarded for being successful." Steve Dewhurst, Commercial Director.

Hansar Finance Ltd

"Hansar Finance Ltd, specialists in providing finance to the coach and bus industry, is pleased to be associated with the routeONE Excellence Awards 2005.

"To confirm its commitment to the industry Hansar is sponsoring the Coach Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles) award. We are looking forward to a successful evening." Ron Telford, Director.

Carlyle Bus & Coach Ltd

"Carlyle Bus & Coach Limited is pleased to be part of the Awards event.

"We have been part of the coach and bus industry for many years and are proud to be part of it.

"When we started building our business a large proportion of our customer base was the small fleet coach operator. Many of these are still with us today.

"This year is also a landmark for Carlyle, as in 2005 we celebrate 20 years as a Van Hool distributor.

"So it is apt that we should sponsor the award for Coach Operator of the Year (1-10 vehicles) and look forward to the year ahead." Steve Dunn, Sales Director.

Alexander Dennis

"We are delighted to be associated with this premier event, promoting excellence in the market place. Excellence is the foundation stone upon which we can work together – manufacturers, operators, local authorities and government - to create better transport solutions.

"Excellence is certainly at the heart of everything we strive to achieve at Alexander Dennis. Sensible, innovative solutions can only be achieved when aligned to the pursuit of excellence and routeONE is to be congratulated on the initiative it has shown in promoting this theme throughout the industry." Jim Hastie, Chief Executive.

Scandus UK

"We are proud to be associated with the routeONE Excellence Awards and we are pleased to be sponsoring Bus Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles)" Nikki Sproule, Financial Director.

Optare

"Optare is delighted to be able to sponsor routeONE Bus Operator of the Year Award (1-10 vehicles) 2005.

"Although the company is now a key supplier to all of Britain's largest privately owned operating groups, much of its success grew from supplying smaller operators and to this day a large proportion of the orders it receives are for small quantities of vehicles.

"In fact, Optare's flexible production system means that it is better able to respond to small orders than many of its competitors. The Award recognises the continuing role of small operators in carrying Britain's bus passengers and Optare is proud to support them." Paul Chapman, Commercial Director.

Ricon

"I think this industry should be very proud of itself and the routeONE Excellence Awards are a welcome opportunity for Ricon to say: 'This is the industry that we are in.' We are proud of what we do and things like the Excellence Awards are very important to the industry." Tony Baugh, Managing Director.

g the winners

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SCANDUSUK

Bus Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles)

OPTARE

Bus Operator of the Year (1-10 vehicles)

RICON INNOVATION IN MOBILITY

Accessible Coach Operator of the Year

WRIGHTBUS

Accessible Bus Operator of the Year

Wrightbus

"It is particularly appropriate that Wrightbus should support the Awards by sponsoring the category 'Accessible Bus Operator of the Year'.

"As a company who has grown through innovation in the design of public transport vehicles we are delighted to recognise and reward those achieving excellence in a related field." Mark Nodder, VP Business Development.

route ONE Excellence Awards 2005
Rewarding the operator

What you need to know...

The time scale

Entry forms go out with routeONE – **10 February**
Deadline for entries – **30 April**
Judges meet to determine shortlist – **May**
Independent business adviser's visits – **June**
Final decisions – **July/August**
Awards presentation – **5 October**

The judges

The judging panel will be co-ordinated by routeONE Editor, **Mike Morgan**. The panel will include: **Mark Thomas** – former MD Western Travel, **David Marsh**, former MD Rider York and **Ron Whittle** – former senior partner Whittle Coach.

The awards night

The routeONE Excellence Awards 2005 will be presented at a gala dinner held at the National Motorcycle Museum on the evening of Wednesday 5 October.

The categories

There are 11 categories covering the full spectrum of coach and bus operation.

- Coach Operator of the Year (31-plus vehicles)
- Coach Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles)
- Coach Operator of the Year (1-10 vehicles)
- Bus Operator of the Year (31-plus vehicles)
- Bus Operator of the Year (11-30 vehicles)
- Bus Operator of the Year (1-10 vehicles)
- Accessible Coach Operator of the Year
- Accessible Bus Operator of the Year
- Coach Manager of the Year
- Bus Manager of the Year
- routeONE Special Award

ence Awards – Wednesday 5 October – British Motorcycle Museum, Birmingham...

Repetitive strain injury

The Marshian asks: Why do I have to keep repeating myself? Why do I have to keep repeating myself? Why do I have to keep...

VOSA inspections unfairly target older vehicles and non-large company vehicles, claims the Marshian

IT HAS been interesting following the legal reports over the last few months and the ever changing views and 'rules' of the Traffic Commissioners.

It's surely about time things were fixed once and for all and not left to the whims of individuals. One thing that springs to mind is local bus route licencing.

Until not so long ago, you could register and, more importantly, deregister an unsuccessful service in 42 days. These days it takes 56 days. If you are unlucky enough to have a cross-boundary route into the Republic of Greater London, this now takes up to 120 days, but, from January 2005, your bus has to have a Euro 1 engine too!

I know I've touched on this subject before, but, I also touched on DDA regulations early in 2004, and look what's happened since! Don't say I didn't tell you so. With the coach industry totally unprepared for DDA, why don't operators stand up and blow a big raspberry to the faceless wonders in Whitehall who dreamt up this well-meaning piffle? Remember, the Government had to stand down over the digital tachograph regulations because the technology wasn't available; can we force them to do the same over DDA?

"All the examiners seem to care about is reaching 'targets'. Who sets these 'targets' and for what reason?"

One other aspect which touches the nerve of some is the fact that from 2015 (yes, I know it's a long time away, but so was 2005 in 1997) it will be virtually impossible to run any form of non-DDA bus or coach in regular service. So, beware all you 'heritage' bus operators out there who do a marvellous job keeping our industry's past alive for all to enjoy; from 2015, DDA means you will be limited to operating your pride and joy on only six days a year! I made this view known to the CPT several years ago, who also said it's a long time away...but it's getting closer.

Having had an enjoyable trip on the Orient Express from Victoria to York recently, courtesy of the CPT (thanks to Karen for organising a splendid day out), it was interesting hearing the views of those outside my normal sphere of operation. There was a general feeling of a growing dislike of the new VOSA, mainly over the usual inherited lack of consistency in standards, keeping the VOSA examiner "happy" (not part of his job?), the problems registering new vehicles from abroad etc. The list seemed endless. One or two chaps said they still had "fire in their bellies" to fight the system and question it when they felt it was wrong. If unsure, appeal!

The main gripe was the old chestnut of prohibitions. A number of people on the train reiterated their stories of inconsistencies, double standards, the pointless issue of many prohibitions, the need of the examiner to "meet his targets." One told the tale of a recent spot check at a large school. As usual, VOSA only targeted the older coaches and non-large company double decks. One A-reg Olympian which had been tested not four weeks prior had a look over. A slight air leak on the wiper motor, nothing dangerous; a loose seat cushion upstairs that the kids had kicked out during the trip; then, horror of horrors, a couple of staples used to repair an armrest, obviously prised up by the kids, were suddenly deemed to present a danger to the travelling public.

When the driver was shown this, he did no more than bash them down with his budget lock key. Problem solved, so he thought. The VOSA man went away to give him the paperwork. A clean sheet or a defect note about the air leak; no, a delayed prohibition and clearance for the sticking up staples! What a complete and utter waste of paper and examiner's time. What a massive failure of PR on the examiner's part. Why the hell can't these people try to encourage the operator instead of trying to score 'brownie' points all the time?

The other problem is that by bashing down the staples, the driver then removed any evidence of the severity of the alleged defect, thereby ruining his chances of winning an appeal over the issue of the PG9. One other question is, what is the legality of an examiner stopping a vehicle off the public road? My view is that he has no right to do so. He was not in a VOSA 'Battenberg' car; he was walking along a line of slow moving buses and coaches. He asked the driver to pull over, which the driver duly did. I was always told that they could only 'pull' a vehicle which was stationary, and unless a police office is present, there is no requirement to stop. Is this PG9 legal as it was obtained under false pretences! Any replies from our legal readers would be appreciated.

All the examiners seem to care about is reaching 'targets'. Who sets these 'targets' and for what reason? A recent article in the Society of Engineers journal touched on annual test pass rates. It found that vehicles presented by main dealers had a worse first time pass rate than those presented by private concerns.

The article did name names, which I won't mention here, but interestingly one main dealer had a first time pass rate of only 60%, while another was trying to reach 80%.

If you are paying up to £60 an hour to get your bus or coach through the annual test first time, you would expect a 100% pass rate and be be rather miffed if it fails. Perhaps the main dealers don't realise it goes on your licence, not theirs. Needless to say, this doesn't make the Traffic Commissioner very happy.

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To advertise your vehicles or services in routeONE Trader call the sales team on the number below or fax your details on 0870 241 8891 and we will call you straight back. Alternatively you can e-mail us at: sales@route-one.net

The deadline for Trader Exchange is Tuesday 8 February – 2.00pm

0870 241 8745

MARCHANT COACHES Volvo B12B Jonckheere Mistrals

TWO new Volvo B12B coaches with Jonckheere Mistral bodies have been added to the fleet of Cheltenham-based Marchant Coaches, supplied by VOLVO BUS (01926 401777).

More than half the Marchant's fleet is Volvo and this time they have chosen the rear-engined B12B chassis, with the Volvo DH12D 420bhp engine and, for the first time in its fleet, I-Shift transmission.

Both have 51 seats, with three-point seat belts, air-conditioning, drinks facilities and a centre sunken toilet, making them ideally suited for ski trips abroad and seaside resort day trips alike.

The new vehicles will also be used by Cheltenham Town FC, taking the 'Robins' to and from their away fixtures, which the firm has been doing for over 30 years.

A family-owned company, Marchants has been established in Cheltenham for more than 50 years. In addition to school contract work and regular local services, the company has expanded its leisure activities and now reckons to be Gloucestershire's leading operator of day trips, holidays and private hire.

Managing Director Roger Marchant told routeONE: "I see this investment as a 'safe bet' for the company's continued development – in fact so confident are we in these new Volvo coaches, that an order for two identical vehicles has already been placed for delivery in time for the new coaching season in April."

STAGECOACH MEGABUS.COM

Neoplan Skyliners

THE FIRST three of an order for 25 Neoplan 13.7m Skyliners has been delivered to Stagecoach by MENTOR COACH & BUS (01709 700600) for use on its megabus.com services, with the first vehicle entering public service on Monday (25 January) on the 0655hrs Aberdeen-London. The new vehicles were launched by Stagecoach Chief Executive Brian Souter (pictured).

The £6.5 million investment will transform the megabus.com network, and the Skyliners will also be used for future network expansion. They feature air-conditioning, seatbelts, CCTV, dedicated luggage space, coat hooks, toilets, more comfortable seats, footrests and better legroom and carry up to 91 passengers, who will still be able to travel from as low as £1 per seat.

Services to London from Glasgow, Aberdeen (via Manchester), Dundee, Perth and are the first to first to be converted to Skyliner operation using six vehicles. More than 1.3 million people have used megabus.com since the nationwide launch of the service in March last year and it now links 30 towns and cities across the UK.

Stagecoach has gone back to its roots with the delivery of the new vehicles. Stagecoach began life 25 years ago as an express coach operator running a high-profile Dundee-London service using Skyliners on four nights each week. The success of the operation led to the service being extended to Aberdeen. A quarter of a century later, having grown into an international empire, Stagecoach has reinvented cheap long-distance coach travel using the same principles.

PS TRAVEL

Optare Soroco

PS TRAVEL of Nailsea, North Somerset, has taken delivery of a 16-seater Soroco mini-coach from OPTARE (0113 264 5182).

The small company doubled its fleet from two to four minibuses in 2004. The Soroco has been bought for use on corporate work, transfers for coach holiday companies and private hire, PS Travel partner Phillip Williams told routeONE.

FIRST GROUP

Alexander Dennis Tridents

MARKING the first deliveries of Trident double-deckers supplied to First Group by ALEXANDER DENNIS (01324 621672) was a special handover ceremony, with Robin Raimond (right) of Alexander Dennis, John Wright (centre), FirstGroup Midland Red Engineering Director along with Stuart Bond Area Service Manager (front).

The vehicle is part of the £15 million First Group order recently announced by Alexander Dennis which are progressively being introduced into service during early 2005.

EDINBURGH COACH LINES LTD

have become the Scottish Agents for Leinster Vehicle Distributors of Urlingford, Ireland.

We have the following new vehicles for sale.

THE BRAND NEW LX29 on Mercedes 0814 chassis, as seen at the Bus & Coach show. This vehicle has 29 reclining seats, air conditioning, TV/DVD, radio/PA system and 3 point seat belts. Also fitted with retarder/brake exhauster. Priced at £87,500

We also have the following used vehicles for sale:

1989 Setra S215HD (white), 49 reclining seats, toilet, fridge, radio & PA system. Wired for video. MoT'd til Dec 2006 **£25,000 ono**

1990 Setra S215HD, all details the same as above. MoT'd til Dec 2006 **£28,000 ono**

1997 Setra S250 (8 speed gearbox 4/4) (P) plate with 48 reclining seats, fridge, toilet, tv/video, hot water dispenser. Taxed and MoT'd. these vehicles are in immaculate condition and have been maintained to a very high standard. Choice of 3 **£80,000 each**

1997 Setra S 250 Auto (R) plate with the same specifications as the vehicles above. Again there is a choice of 3 **£85,000 each**

1998 Volvo B10M Caetano Enigma (white), 51 reclining seats with air-con, radio PA system, wired for video and MoT'd til March 2006. **£75,000 ono**

1998 Volvo B10M Caetano Enigma (Silver), 49 reclining seats, toilet, radio, pa system, tv/video, moTd till June 2005 **£70,000 ono**

1996 Toyota Optimos (6 cylinder type)choice of 3 (2 silver, 1 white) with large boots. All have air-con & radio/PA systems with large boots. MoT'd til March & April 2006. **£14,000 ono**

1997 Toyota Coaster (4 cylinder) 18 seat with air con, radio & pa system & large boot. MoTtill feb 2005 **£14,000 ono**

All these vehicles have removable vinyls. all prices are + VAT & sale only

Contact Peter on 0131 554 5413

DREW WILSON

BUS AND COACH SALES

Tel/Fax: 01555 840848 - Mobile: 07764 200444

1998 Mercedes Sprinter, 16 H/B seats, seatbelts, manual gearbox, white exterior, **£16,000**

2002 Mercedes 814 Vario Optare Nouvelle 2, 29 seats, 50,000 miles, new MoT, large boot, v.g.c **£65,000**

2002 (52) Mercedes Vario 814D Plaxton Cheetah 33 coach seats, MoT Sept 05, large boot, white, 50,000 miles, **£62,000**

1986 Paramount 3200 Bedford, 41 retrimmed seats, repainted white, new MoT, VGC, **£4,900**

2003 Mercedes 814 Vario Optare Nouvelle First reg 11/03, 27,000 miles, 33 coach seats, new MoT, large boot, VGC, **£68,000**

1989 Duple 320 Javelin, 70 seats, 11 months MoT, coach seats, 3-point belts, **£25,000**

Mercedes 709, 27 seats, Alexander Bus, seatbelts, manual gear box, 314,110km, 1995 (N), new MoT. 04, **£7,000**

1996 Volvo B10M Van Hool Alizee, 53 retrimmed seats, (49 plus w/c), new MoT, VGC, **£60,000**

1990 Volvo B10 Paramount 3200, 57 seater, **£24,950**

2001 Ford Transit, 15 seats, PSV, MoT 09/05, Factory Bus, white exterior, VGC, **£10,500**

Volvo B10M Caetano, Year 1993, 53 seats, MoT expiry: 08.02.2005, **£47,000**

Volvo B10M Plaxton Paramount 3500, Year 1988, 57 seats, MoT expiry: 09.05.2005, new stretch panels, **£20,000**

Volvo B10M Plaxton 3500, Year 1987, 57 seats, MoT expiry: 28.12.2004, new stretch panels, **£16,500**

Volvo B10M Alizee T9, 1999/2000, MoT's, 49/53 seats, Royal Class seats, toilet (fixed), suit rail, fridge, boiler, radio cassette, P/A, wired for video, lap belts throughout, **£95,000 - £119,000**

Volvo B10M Paramount 3500, 1988, MoT 01.03.2005, ZF, 6SP, 57 recliners, white, good condition for year, **£18,000**

Volvo B10M Plaxton Premiere 350, Year 1995, 53 seats, Mot expiry: 09.03.2005, **£55,000**

Volvo B10M Plaxton Premiere 350, Year 1997, 49/53 seats, MoT expiry: 24.03.2005 **£75,000**

Volvo B10M Jonckheere, Year 1996, 49/53 seats, new MoT **£65,000**

Volvo B10M Van Hool, Year 1994, 49/53 seats, MoT **£55,000**

Volvo B10M Caetano Algarve, Year 1994, 49 seats, MoT expiry: 26.07.2005, **£50,000**

Many more vehicles available. Call for full listing.

Clarkson Coachways

1990 Volvo B10M Jonckheere Deauville

Low driver, 51 reclining seats with courier, fitted with retractable seatbelts, rear sunken toilet, continental door, wired for video and monitor, good condition, 12 months MoT

£21,000 ono + Vat

Tel. 01229 828 022

(Cumbria)

Mercedes Super Low Floor : 26 seats on Sprinter available now. Call for demonstration, welfare & or service + wheelchairs, roll on roll off used low mileage. p/x welcome.

Leyland Titan double deck : 83 Gardner 76 seats, air suspension, all good tyres, tested April 2005 – value finance available

MCW Alexander double deck : 76 seated + 8 air suspension, good tyres only **£3500.00** p/x welcome, one only now

Scania double deck N113 : 80 seated single door Alexander body tested 27.03.2005 superb order only **£20000.00** p/x & finance

1988 Volvo Citybus double deck : 85 seats + 14 standees tested to 03.05.2005 very good tyres, seats & body work – value for money **£17000.00** p/x & finance

1985 Volvo Plaxton 4000 triple axle : 66 seats (like new) racks, reading lights, toilet all executive spec., blinds, bunk, fridge & boiler **£16000.00** – 1 year test, what an eye full locker & a recent Volvo replacement engine by Volvo finance & p/x , zf 6 speed

1994 Dennis Lance super low floor 37 + 27 12 metre + standees or convert to 70 seat (coach) auto Allison Cummins, Birkhoff, body 12 metre, call for demo – part exchange welcome – very futuristic look p/x & terms

Toyota - import 7 + driver auto turbo diesel, underfloor Previa air conditioning recliners – very good condition. – **£5000.00 ono**

p/x - terms welcome

Choice of six new Mercedes service buses 33 + 7 standees auto & Telma also 2 only with spring suspension, Diptac poles, plus new 33 seat luxury Mercedes coach all extras or 29 & super boot or 25 & jumbo boot, cheetah cheetah cheetah plus used ones. p/x - terms welcome

BLYTHSWOOD MOTORS

0141 221 3165 / 0141 639 6107 (EVENINGS)

1984 Neoplan Skyliner, Mercedes V10 recon engine, new gearbox + clutch fitted, tested June 2005, in white, 75 belted seats **£13,500**

2x Ford R114, 53-seaters, both fully belted, clean + tidy, loads of spares, spares or repairs, open to offers,

Tel. 0191-5872020

97 P Volvo B10M Plaxton Excalibur, 49R, C/S/T, TV Video, drinks fridge, Telma etc. MoT December 2005, a very clean example

£68,000 + VAT ono

97 R Autobus Nouvelle, 29 seater, MoT July, a very clean example,

£36,000 + VAT ono

Both vehicles available immediately

Tel. 07764 225092/4

Heatons Motor Co

(WIGAN)

1999 (T) Ford Transit

Coachbuilt 16 seats, fully auto external tail lift, powerdoor, front entry, Turbo Diesel, low mils, complete flat floor, carpetlined, a nice dual purpose vehicle. PSV Tested.

£10,495

1995 Mercedes 609

15/16 Highback seats (all on tracking),(whitacre conversion), power door, front entry, internal tail lift, full carpetlined, PSV tested, low mls, superb value at

£4,995

97/98 Iveco 49-10,

15/16 highback seats, external tail lift, power front plug door, tinted windows, unwin tracking, very clean excemple, class V tests but would easly coifed, **Choice of 2**

from **£5,495**

98 Mercedes Sprinter 410

Front lowered step entry, 13 highback seats in Moquette, lots of unwin tracking, external tailift, fully carpetlined, exceptionally clean inside & out, average miles, superb & sought after vehicle

Excellent value at **£12,995**

01 Citroen Relay SWB

8/12 highback seats, 4 point belts trimmed in nice fabric, non slip floor, 2.5 diesel, 55,000 miles, silver metallic, PAS, immaculate inside & out, FSH

£7,495

Ford Transit 17 seat Jumbo,

Factory spec, tinted windows etc, 60,000 miles, choice of 2, both in first class condition, very much sought after at this price

£13,850 Beat that for Value!

W Vauxhaul Movano LWB,

Diesel, PAS, 12 highback seats, 4 pointbelts, in cloth trim, lots of unwin tracking, full carpetlined, Rolac Ramp, SLD door with pullout step, excellent value

£12,750

03 Ford Transit Tourneo

9 seat, twin SLD's, 16,000 miles, all the usual refinements, totally like new

£12,995 +VAT

W Ford Transit

17 seat long cube, factory spec, 30,000 miles 12 months PSV MoT. Where else can you find this excellent workhorse with this mileage and in this condition.

£9,995

98 R Mercedes 410

16 passenger seats, 4 point belts, external tailift, full carpetlined, SLD with pulldown step LIVG Coachwork, chrome Euroliners, walnut dash, low miles, 12 months PSV test. Extremely rare and desirable minibus **£13,995** Choice of 2

01 Renault Mascot

16 highback seats, 4 point belts, external tailift, 25,000 miles, 6 spd, front lowered step entry. Absolutely brand new condition offered at a fraction of new price at

£15,995

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Exchange

For Sale By Operator

2002 (02) Van Hool Scania T9 body, 49 str or 39 with tables, silver, unwritten, low mileage 100k Kms. **£119,950.00 & VAT**

2000 (W) Neoplan Cityliner, Mercedes, 49 str, white, very good order **£99,950.00 & VAT**

2000 (W) Mercedes 814, 20 str, exec. Leather seats, tables, WC, fridges, hot drinks, TV/Video/Aircon, white, low mileage 94k kms **£54,950.00 & VAT**

2002 (02) Mercedes Sprinter 413 CDI Optare Sirocco, 16 str, power door, large boot, Aircon, 135k kms **£34,950.00 & VAT**

2001 (51) Mercedes Sprinter 413 CDI, Olympus Coachcraft, 16 str, 2 tables, power door, Aircon, large boot, 140k kms **£29,950.00 & VAT**

All vehicles are taxed and tested. Photographs available.

Phone MCH 01895-230643 (Uxbridge) Office Hours

1992 Daf SB220 Ikarus Citybus, 42 seats + 24 standing, MoT 31/03/2005, **£13,500 + VAT**

2002 (October) Daf SB120 Wright Cadet, 39 seats + 23 standing, DDA, Radio/PA/CD, MoT September 2005, Taxed September 2005 **£67,000 + VAT**

Contact Sandy, Cumbrae Coaches
Tel. 01475 530692
Fax. 01475 530314

1989 Van Hool Alizee, Daf SB2300, 51 seats, centre sunken toilet, TV, Monitor, Sutrak Air Con, MoT March 2005, **£18,000 + VAT**

1990 Plaxton Paramount 3500 Volvo B10M, 53 seats, complete set of double glazed windows replaced February 2004, MoT June 2005, **£19,500 + VAT**

1990 Plaxton Paramount 3500 Daf SB 3000, 51 seats, centre sunken toilet, Sutrak Air con, MoT November 2005, **£22,500 + VAT**

1992 Plaxton Paramount 3200 Daf SB2305, 55 seats, Sutrak Air Con., MoT March 2005, **£21,500 + VAT**

1993 Leyland Daf 400, 17 seats factory conversion, MoT December 2005, **£1,250 + VAT**

1995 Leyland Daf 400, 16 seats, high roof, front entry, Holloway conversion, MoT August 2005, **£2,900 + VAT**

Telephone 0208 808 2000/6446

1982 Volvo B10M Plaxton Supreme, 57 retrimmed seats with retractable belts, MoT October 2005. Good condition **£ POA**

SOLD

1987 Bedford YMP Plaxton Paramount, 35 str, MoT June 2005, excellent condition, **£ POA**

1998 R reg LDV Convoy, 16str, high roof Mini coach, 3 point belts, front entry power door, 12 months MoT, **£ POA**

SOLD

Tel. 01994-240274 West Wales

For Sale

Setra 215HR, 53 seats, s/b, p/p, Radio PA, tested Oct. 2005, choice of 2, plain white

Scania K112 Jonckheere, 55 seats, s/b,p/p, Radio PA, sold with new test

Daf MB2300 Caetano, s/b, 49 seats, toilet, TV Video, Radio, PA,p/p, tested Oct 2005, all plain white

Tel. 01797-344164

1997 Mercedes Vario 814 Plaxton Beaver, 27 bus seats, MoT until December 2005 **£17,500 ono**

1994 Bova Futura, 49 seats, new repaint in white, new style front, toilet, fridge, wired for video, MoT until April 2005 **£45,500 ono**

1989 Dennis Javelin Duple 320 57 seats, MoT April 2005 **£4,250 ono**

SOLD

1990 Optare Delta DAF SB220, 49 bus seats, MoT until March 2005 **£9,000 ono**

1988 Scania N112 Van Hool Auto Service Bus, 48 seats, MoT until April 2005 **£7,500 ono**

Tel. 01671-830284

J.J. Travel Ltd.

1982 Volvo B10M Vanhool, 54 seater, TV + Video, Remoquetted seats, **£7,500 ono**

1986 Plaxton Paramount 3200 Leyland TL11, Remoqueted 51/49 seats, choice of 2, **£6,000 ono**

1983 Volvo B10M Plaxton 5, 53 seater, ideal school bus, **£4,000 ono**

1996 Mercedes 814, 33 seater wired for TV + Video, Autobus Classique, **£20,000 ono**

2002 Mercedes 814 Vario, 24 seater, **£28,000 ono**

1995 Mercedes 711, 25 seater, **£8,000 ono**

All the above are belted and will be sold with minimum 10 months MoT.

Mercedes Service buses from 24 seaters to 33 seaters, Alexander and Reeveburgess Plaxton bodies from **£4,500**

Telephone 01236-441188 (24 hrs)

Beeline of Warminster

1985 Cummins powered Bedford YNT, 53 belted seats, excellent condition, MoT September 2005, **£5,800 + VAT**

1987 Volvo B10M low drive Paramount, 53 belted seats, good condition, MoT November 2005, **£9,000+VAT**

Tel. 01985 213503

03 Enviro 300, radio cassette and phone kit fitted, low miles, 6 new tyres, just serviced, SLF, 45 seats plus 27 standees, **£89,850 ono**

03 DDA Plaxton Beaver 2, Dual purpose, 33 H/B 3 point belt seats, radio cassette, boot, etc., 78,000 km from new, **£48,500 ono**

1989 Northern Counties, 88 seat Decker, Scania K 113, Voith automatic, new tyres, good condition, last 5 years school's morning & afternoons only, **£19,500 ono**

1996 Alexander Sprinter 22 seat service bus 709D, new test, good condition, **£8,850 ono**

07831 637 985 (Scotland)
01786 814 319

WHITELAWS COACHES

2 x 2000 W reg Volvo B10MT Triaxle Van Hool Alizee T9 Executive 49/53, centre demountable toilet, electronic G8 gearbox, air conditioned, royal comfort class seats, seatbelts, TV & video, radio/cassette/PA system, fridge, alloy wheels, excellent condition, one owner from new, current MoT **£POA**

1 x 1998 S reg Iveco Eurorider 290 Marshall Maxibus Service Vehicle, 51 seats, 24 standees, ZF automatic 4 speed gearbox, excellent condition, one owner from new, current MoT.

CONTACT WILLIAM WHITELAW
WHITELAW COACHES
LOCHPARK INDUSTRIAL ESTATE
STONEHOUSE ML9 3LR
01698 793506 or 01698 792800

Courtney Coaches Ltd

1998 MAN Noge Tri Axle, 49 seater, full exec coach, seat back tables, DVD, twin monitors, resprayed all white, chrome wheels, clutch just replaced by MAN dealer, MOT until May 2005 **£70,000**

Choice of two

1997 Scania Tri Axle 49 seater, full exec coach, DVD, twin monitors, MoT until June 2005 **£65,000**

1996 Scania Tri Axle 49 seater, full exec coach, DVD twin monitors, MoT until June 2005, **£60,000**

2001 (51 Reg) Optare Solo 33 seater, 3 point lap belts, forced air, reading lights, wheel trims, radio PA, cassette microphone, drivers fan, Telma retarders, blue moquette/blue curtains, carpet to floor, ours from new, luggage racks, boot and walnut dash. Used only on corporate sites, MoT until Nov. 2005, 82,000 miles, only **£52,000** Immaculate unmarked condition inside and out

2000/W Optare Solo 33 Seater, 3 point lap belts, forced air, reading lights, wheel trims, radio PA cassette microphone, driver fan, Telma retarders, blue moquette/blue curtains, carpet to floor, ours from new, luggage racks, boot and walnut dash. Used only on corporate sites, MoT until May 2005, 132,000 miles only **£47,000** Immaculate unmarked condition inside and out

All the above vehicles are for sale due to delivery of new vehicles. All vehicles are taxed with full service history.

For more details please call

Tel: (01344) 412302

Don't miss out

SCANIA IRIZAR CENTURY 1994
Coach of the Year £55,000 + VAT
44 reclining seats, rear sunken toilet, rear continental door, video, leather driver/crew seats

1990 NEOPLAN MERCEDES CITYLINER
£55,000 + VAT
49 reclining seats, centre sunken toilet, centre continental door, triaxle

BOTH COACHES
with crew seat, seat belts, air conditioning, fridge, water boiler, radio, PA, telma retarder, new MoT, one owner, very good condition, low mileage for age

Tel: 01453 882297

Don Henshaws COACH TOURS

49 Exec Hispano Merc 2000 W **£90,000** very good condition. First to see will buy!

49 Exec Bova Daf 2000 W **£96,000** very good condition. Bosses coach!

51/49 + table Jonckhere Volvo **£91,000** very good condition

All coaches will be tested. All are in daily use. All are very, very clean.

Call Paul: 01773 607 909/607

1994 Scania R113 CRB Van Hool
49 seat exec
1996 Iveco Beulas
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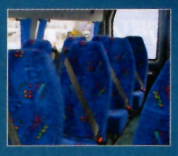

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1992 Volvo B10M, 57 seats, Van Hool, 1 year's MoT, retrimmed seats, Webasto heater, inspection welcome, 1 previous owner, service history from new.

£34,950.00 + VAT

Ingleby's Luxury Coaches Ltd. York,

Tel. 01904 637620

Dec 95, Volvo B10M Plaxton Premiere

Centre continental door, curtains, PA System, centre demountable toilet, centre carpet, MoT Oct 2005,

£50,000 + VAT

Tel. 01656 739928 or 01656 733209 (evening)

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Due to fleet upgrade Red Kite Travel have the following for sale

1989 F reg Leyland Tiger 345 Plaxton 3200, manual box, 53 seater, recently MoT'd, straight coach, good work horse, in daily use, **£9,950 + VAT ono**

1992 K reg Volvo B10M Plaxton Premiere 350, ZF auto, full executive coach, 46 seats + crew, large rear washroom and servery, hot and cold, 4x fridges and larders, wired for TV/Video, long MoT loads of underfloor luggage, **£24,950 + VAT ono**

For further details please contact Mark at Red Kite Travel on 01744 616 181 or 07779 662889

1995 Man Eos 49str, exec video monitor, toilet, tea machine, new MoT 2006, any trial £55,000 ono plus VAT

1998 Daf Bova 49 str, exec video monitor, toilet, tea machine, air con, Telma retarder, new MoT 2006, any trial, £85,000 plus VAT

1990 709 Mercedes 29 coach seats, MoT July 2005, 814 Turbo engine, any trial, £7,500 ono plus VAT

Mercedes 220 Elegance September 2002, 26,000 miles one lady owner, automatic cruise control, elec. Seats, elec. mirrows, central locking, air con, CD player , £17,500 ono

Mitsubishi L200 Cabster, July 2003, Diesel, £11,750 ono plus VAT

1981 Bedford duple 53 seater belted MoT September 2005, £3,250 ono plus VAT

1983 Volvo B10M Berkhof, toilet, tea machine, MoT August 2005, £9,000 ono plus VAT

All above vehicles in daily use and any trial or inspection. Contact 01443 435805 or 07966 228907, ask for Gary

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1999 (T) Mercedes 814 Nouvelle 2, 29 seats with large boot
1995 (PP) Mercedes 814D Nouvelle 1, 33 coach spec with boot
1988 (PP) Volvo B10M Plaxton 3200, 53 seats

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1984 DENNIS DORCHESTER AUTO
55 SEATS • HIGH MILEAGE BUT VERY RELIABLE • MOT MARCH 2005
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1991 VOLVO B 10 PLAXTON 3500 AUTO
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CHOICE OF 50

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53 PLATE LDV CONVOY TURBO DIESEL
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2 x Dennis Dart, Plaxton Pointer bodies, 35 seats, J & K reg, long tests ready to work. - £9,995 and £10,750.

1 x Leyland National 2, in bright yellow school bus colours, 52 seats, belted - £3,750.

1 x Leyland Lynx, G reg, cummins engine, retrimmed coach seats - £7,250.

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Volvo B10M Plaxton Excalibur

51 reclining seats, fully carpeted, white, very good condition inside and out, courier seat, curtains, new style mirrors, Telma, Webasto, ex WA – 2 owners. Choice of two, **£32,000 each + VAT**

1996 (June) Berkhof Excellence 1000 Dennis Javelin 290 Cummins

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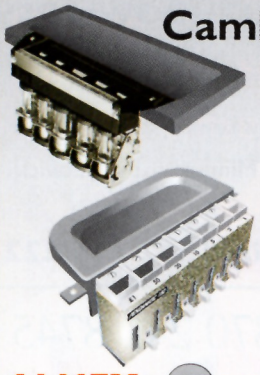

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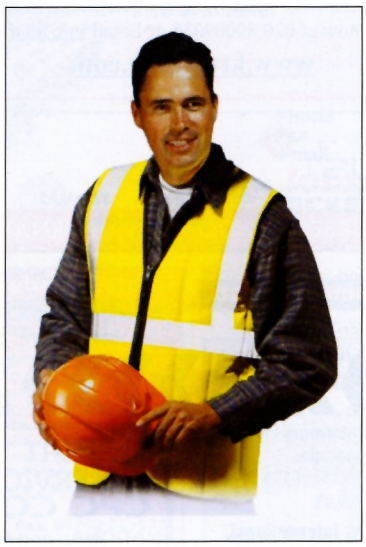
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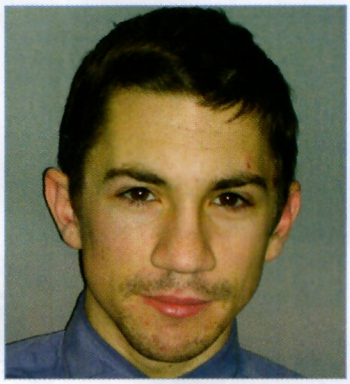
Reflecting statutory requirements and the Government's approach to diversity in public appointments, the new Committee has 65% of members who are disabled, 45% who are women and 20% from minority ethnic communities. They also represent a wide geographical spread.

The Committee continues to be chaired by Neil Betteridge whose appointment was not subject to this review.

The members are: Pravinkant Amin, Ann Bates, Sean Bolton, Josephine Clairmont, Vidur Dindayal, Jean Dunlop, David Finnegan, Julie Giles, Roger Hewitt, Grahame Lawson, Jenny Meadows, Alan Norton, Thomas Pey, Katherine Phipps, David Pugh, Keith Richards, Laura Smales, Kate Smyth, Carol Thomas and Richard West.

Simon Townsend joins Almex

SIMON Townsend has joined Gloucestershire-based Almex as a sales engineer to support growing sales for the company's products, especially Optima, the bus revenue information system.



Simon, 22, has significant experience in IT, in particular 'back-office' technology, hardware and system configurations. "I am delighted to be joining the team at a time of growth, particularly with the new Optima system," he told routeONE.

recruitment

solentblueline

ENGINEERING MANAGER

A reorganisation has created a vacancy for an Engineering Manager, to take responsibility for our fleet of around 70 vehicles.

While the successful candidate will of course ensure that all our vehicles and premises are maintained in line with all relevant legal standards, above all he or she will recognise the importance of meeting the high expectations of customers and staff, that our vehicles should be safe, reliable, smartly presented and comfortable to travel in and drive.

The postholder will be an excellent leader and motivator of our engineering staff, ensuring that they feel part of a successful team, driving up standards and providing first class service to other parts of the business.

He or she will nevertheless recognise the importance of tight cost control and will possess appropriate budgetary skills.

Reporting to the Service Delivery Director, as part of a new management team the postholder will play a key role in helping us to develop and expand our business at an exciting time for public transport in South Hampshire.

Applications with CV should be addressed to Phil Stockley, Managing Director, Solent Blue Line, Barton Park, Eastleigh S050 6RR or pstockley@solentblueline.com, to be received by 18th February 2005.

nextweek

routeONE issue 64

10 February 2005

Your chance to be a winner!

EXCELLENCE within the coach and bus industry will be recognised at the first routeONE Excellence Awards, which are scheduled for Wednesday 5 October, 2005. The prestige event coincides with next year's industry show, Coach & Bus Live, and it will take place at the National Motorcycle Museum, which is convenient for the NEC.

The routeONE Excellence Awards are specifically for coach and bus operators, providing an opportunity to put you and your company in the running for the ultimate accolade of being voted the best in the business.

The entry process starts next week and you will have until the end of April to complete and return a questionnaire. We will not make the process onerous, but we will be asking some pertinent questions. Our main concerns cover the following: what has been achieved in the recent past; current performance; future intentions and your ability to meet these ambitions.

There are 11 categories covering the full spectrum of coach and bus operation.

The categories cover three sizes of coach operator, and three sizes of bus operator. In addition we will be recognising those who have made special efforts to provide exceptional service for passengers with mobility difficulties.

Also, we will not forget the importance of the people responsible for your company's performance. We will be looking for nominations from operators for the best coach manager and the best bus manager. Then there's a special award that will be reserved for that one person (or company) who stands out from the crowd.

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